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CHOICE

Independent information for smart consumers

Tests

DAYPACKS
DISHWASHERS
JOGGER STROLLERS
TINNED TUNA
DISHWASHER DETERGENTS
SINGLE-USE CAMERAS

RUNNING SHOES

The best & fairest

'SPORTS' WATER

Money down the drain?

CREDIT FILE BUNGLES

Mistaken identity and other stories

COMING SOON IN CHOICE

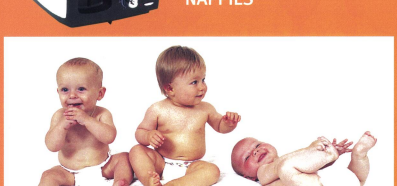
TOASTERS

GLYCAEMIC INDEX (GI)

FUEL AND OIL ADDITIVES

WASHING MACHINES

NAPPIES



this month online

www.choiceextra.com.au

This is the free website exclusive to CHOICE personal subscribers. Look out for this symbol in magazine articles — it indicates there's extra info online.

Dishwashers

If you need to choose one soon, use our interactive 'compare a dishwasher' feature. Just type in your needs and it'll find suitable models for you. Go to www.choiceextra.com.au and look under 'dishwashers' in the index.

www.choice.com.au

CHOICE's public website, including content from *Computer* CHOICE, 'compare-a-product' features, and news on consumer issues and our public campaigns.

Credit card selector

Had a nasty fright with your Christmas credit card bill? Check which one will hurt the least come next Christmas with our interactive credit card selector — go to www.choice.com.au/money.

Travel insurance

Planning the long-awaited overseas holiday this year? Before you jet off, make sure you choose the best policy from our travel insurance database — go to www.choice.com.au/money.

Personal CHOICE subscribers can have a discounted membership to www.choice.com.au for just $7.50 per quarter (see page 50). If you currently have free access for 12 months, this will continue until that time is up, after which the discounted subscription will be available.

Spreading the word

If you start seeing CHOICE's name in your local paper, don't be surprised: to help build awareness of CHOICE and the importance of consumer rights, CHOICE columns are now being published in rural, regional and community newspapers around the country. We've adapted some of our existing articles into short, informative columns to provide more consumers with general information about their rights and the work we do at CHOICE.

Topics for the columns will include consumer rights issues and general how-to-buy/what to look for advice for goods and services, such as household items, financial services and computer-related products. We're providing the columns free of charge and won't be detailing the kind of brand information you get in the magazine, but newspaper readers can of course join our website, www.choice.com.au, or subscribe to the magazine if they want additional information.

The project kicked off late last year with an arrangement with Rural Press, publisher of over 150 regional newspapers across Australia.

We'd appreciate your help as a subscriber to give us an idea of where our columns are being used. As we're based in Sydney we don't have access to most of the newspapers that could be printing our columns. If you live in a regional area, we'd be grateful if you'd keep an eye out in your local newspaper — columns may include a small CHOICE logo. Let us know where you read any columns and what you think by emailing newscolumns@choice.com.au or phoning (02) 9577 3399. If possible, please send us a copy to: Five-minute CHOICE columns, 57 Carrington Road, Marrickville 2204.

This is an opportunity to spread the word about CHOICE and the importance of consumer rights and your help would be greatly appreciated.

Jane Mackenzie
Editor

CHOICE TRAVEL

CHOICE is no longer publishing this magazine, which was reprinted from the UK Consumers' Association's *Holiday Which?* To subscribe direct, write to *Holiday Which?*, Castlemead, Gascoyne Way, Hertford X, SG14 1LH, UK, email holiday@which.net or phone 44 1992 822800. You can pay by Visa, Mastercard and Amex and they'll let you know the subscription price in dollars.

CONTENTS

January/February 2004

COVER STORY

8 **Running shoes**
Which are the best, and which can you buy relatively guilt-free?
Photo: Getty Images

REPORTS

20 **Credit file bungles**
Mistaken identity and other stories: is the right info on *your* credit file?

27 **'Sports' water**
Diet-changing drink or money down the drain?

TESTS

15 **Tinned tuna**
Finding the best from more than 50.

24 **Single-use cameras**
The best do the job; the worst will disappoint you.

33 **Jogger strollers**
Not a good look when a wheel falls off.

37 **Dishwashers**
Test results for 25 models and ...

42 **Dishwasher detergents**
... what to use in them.

44 **Daypacks**
The best packs for a day in the bush.

REGULARS

4 Choice Cuts

7 Your Letters

14 Hip Pocket: Car insurance quirks; super regulator criticised

30 Consumer Bookshelf

36 Food Bites: Reusing plastic bottles; salt in processed foods

48 Recalls and bans

50 About CHOICE

51 CHOICE index: March 2003 — Jan/Feb 2004

52 The Hard Word

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Birthing centres give good results

Typical obstetric wards, with their clinical, antiseptic atmosphere, aren't the most comfortable places for expectant mums and their partners. Home-like birthing centres are an attempt to overcome this. Ideally they're more comfortable and informal but offer the same level of medical assistance that a hospital can, should it be required.

Researchers have conducted a review of the medical literature and found that, for women at low risk of obstetric complications, there are indeed benefits, according to December 2003 CHOICE *Health Reader*.

The researchers looked at six trials involving almost 9000 women. Compared to women in a traditional hospital ward, those in birthing centres needed less pain relief, less assisted delivery with forceps and fewer caesareans. They also expressed greater satisfaction with the level of care they received.

As for safety, the researchers found a slight increase in mortality rates in birth centres — not enough to be statistically significant (in other words, other research could show a different result), but enough to encourage both mums and care givers to be vigilant for signs of complications.

TAMARA GOHARRI

Also in this issue of CHOICE *Health Reader*:

- A study shows that, despite the traditional belief to the contrary, people who are obese generally tolerate surgery just as well as those who aren't.
- Researchers have discovered that wearing a tight tie can affect the pressure inside your eyeball. As there's a link between high eye pressure and glaucoma, it makes sense to loosen your tie — or not wear one at all.

If you'd like to subscribe to CHOICE *Health Reader*, call 1800 069 552, go to www.choice.com.au or see page 49.

Behind the label

If you've shopped at a major clothing retailer in NSW in recent months you may have seen 'Behind the Label' signs or posters displayed. These (see an example, right) identify the retailer as a signatory to the Retailers' Ethical Clothing Code of Practice, an agreement between the Textile, Clothing and Footwear Union of Australia and the Australian Retailers Association, designed to combat the exploitation of clothing outworkers (people who work at home).

In recent years the use of outworkers in the clothing industry has increased dramatically. Around 50,000 work in NSW alone, many of them for 12 hours or more a day, six to seven days a week, for as little as $2 an hour (that's at least $10 below the minimum wage), with no sick or holiday pay, WorkCover or super.

Outworkers are one of the most vulnerable groups in the workforce. They're typically newly arrived women migrants, disadvantaged by isolation and limited English language skills, and at high risk of occupational injury and disease.

The 'Behind the Label' strategy is a NSW Government initiative designed to promote an ethical clothing trade and address the exploitation of outworkers in the clothing industry.

COOL WINE

Need a cold bottle of white quickly? Your options include the fridge, the freezer, a bucket of ice and cold water, one of those silver frozen sleeve thingies, or the new **SUNBEAM Wine Chiller** ($70).

It's basically an insulated ice bucket with a small motor that pumps icy water round the bottle. You put the bottle with two trays of ice cubes and cold water into the bucket and set a timer switch to activate the motor for a set time (up to 20 minutes) or indefinitely.

Once the wine's been cooled, you can remove the cord and take the chiller to the table to use as an ice bucket.

We tested it under conditions similar to a summer's day, with a bottle of wine at room temperature (25°C), two trays of ice and cold water from the tap (20°C). With the motor running it took 16 minutes to cool the wine to 10°C (which is close to the recommended temperature for still or sparkling white wine). Without the motor it took 24 minutes. With cooler starting temperatures — water from the fridge, a bottle of wine from the cellar and/or more ice — it would be even faster.

For comparison, the fridge took over two hours, the freezer 43 minutes and a large bucket of water and ice 18 minutes (although this would require more ice than most people would have in their freezer).

The **SUNBEAM Wine Chiller** could be useful if you often find yourself needing white wine chilled quickly — if friends pop round unexpectedly or you've forgotten to put a bottle in the fridge earlier. It could also make a useful gift for the gadget-lover with everything. Just make sure you keep those ice cube trays full!

(A similar product, the **BREVILLE Chill Out Rapid Wine Chiller WC15**, became widely available just as we were going to press; we didn't have time to test it too.)

CHRISTIAN WILSON

NSW GOVERNMENT

Retailers who sign the Retailers' Ethical Clothing Code of Practice have to ensure that their local suppliers' employment practices comply with Australian laws and regulations for the employment of outworkers. Manufacturers seeking accreditation must comply with award provisions, rates of pay, hours, workers' compensation, super and notices of termination. Retailers also have to work with unions to investigate any reports of unfair practice, and take action to ensure their suppliers comply with relevant laws and awards.

When the consumer awareness program was launched last November, over 40 companies (comprising more than 1000 retail outlets) had signed the code. Their commitment is commendable and deserves consumer support.

What's needed now is more commitment from manufacturers and retailers towards their workforce in low-wage countries, considering that much more clothing is imported than is Australian-made, and the very poor response to our 'ethical jeans' survey last year (see CHOICE, June 2003, or go to www.choiceextra.com.au and click on 'jeans, Jun 03').

CAT AND DOG FUR: LABELLING ISN'T ENOUGH

In October last year we reported on the sale of imported clothing and toys made from real cat and dog fur. As if the brutal slaughter wasn't bad enough (see October 2003, page 6), the Humane Society International (HSI) now reports that products it's tested contain extremely high levels of chromium — far exceeding Australian standards.

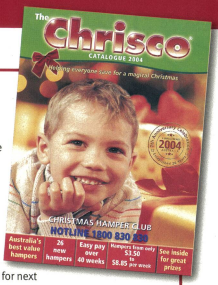
Chromium is used in the tanning process at the Asian fur factories. A number of forms of chromium can penetrate into cells, where they can cause DNA damage, gene mutation and chromosomal abnormality; some forms have been identified as human and animal carcinogens.

Chromium can be inhaled or swallowed, so the toys containing high levels are a particular threat to babies and toddlers, who tend to put everything into their mouth and suck it.

At the time of going to press, the government — unlike several overseas countries including the United States, Italy and Denmark — still hadn't banned the import of cat and dog fur products and had indicated it may opt for labelling instead (you can read it to your toddler). To make your views heard and help HSI secure a ban, write to the Prime Minister and tell him you're angered by the fur trade's cruel practices and use of misleading labels ('racoon dog', 'gae-wolf', etc) to dupe consumers into buying their products.

Address letters to the Prime Minister — and the Federal Minister for the Environment — c/- Parliament House, Canberra 2600. You'll find useful hints for your letter on HSI's website (www.hsi.org.au), and you can also contact the society at PO Box 439, Avalon 2107; phone (02) 9973 1728 or 1800 333 737 toll-free.

A Chrisco Christmas?



If you've ever watched daytime TV, especially in the New Year, you may have wondered whether ordering a **CHRISCO Christmas hamper** was a good-value way of budgeting for Christmas. (For those who don't know what **CHRISCO** is, you order your hamper now for next Christmas and pay for it over the year.)

The CHOICE food team wondered that too, so we took a look at one of **CHRISCO**'s most popular Christmas hampers and compared what it would cost if you bought the equivalent products in the supermarket (we priced our hamper in November 2003).

The result? As **CHRISCO** admits in its catalogue, it does cost somewhat more to get the **CHRISCO** hamper than to go supermarket shopping. In the case of the **CHRISCO Traditional Hamper**, it's $266 compared to our price of about $235 in the supermarket. But it does deliver a large range of goodies as well as some of the basics for Christmas, in a way that may be more affordable or convenient for some people. (**CHRISCO** isn't the only company that offers hampers, but it's probably the best known.)

The CHOICE food team also wondered what the financial implications are for saving for Christmas in this way — enter the CHOICE money team.

According to our financial gurus, if you instead set up a special savings account (see below), you could be earning almost 5% on your money. On that basis, putting in the same amount as you'd pay **CHRISCO** for the above hamper over a year would leave you with around $275 to spend — not much difference in value from the hamper, but you'd get to choose what you spent it on. If you put aside a little more, you'd have some money for presents, too.

WHICH ACCOUNT?

Your first thought may be of a Bonus Saver or Christmas account, which certainly are options, but an electronic savings account generally offers a higher interest rate. E-accounts generally only offer phone or internet transactions and must be linked to another bank account to get at your funds.

Setting up a direct debit to save every month means the money will automatically go from your linked account into your e-account, but getting money back out of your e-account may take a few days, as there's a delay transferring between accounts — all of which adds up to less temptation to raid your funds.

Some well-known e-accounts are **AMP Easysaver, DRAGONDIRECT Directsaver** and **ING Direct Savings Maximiser,** though it's worth checking with several financial institutions to get the most competitive rate.

Bought an Abtronic?

The Federal Court in Brisbane recently ruled that advertising claims made by the promoters of the Abtronic were misleading and deceptive to consumers. In another win for consumers as a result of action initiated by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC), the Federal Court ruled that Danoz Direct, the promoter of the Abtronic, had to broadcast public announcements correcting the representations made.

Danoz Direct admitted during the proceedings that some claims advertised were misleading and in breach of the Trade Practices Act. These included that the Abtronic had a fat and cellulite blaster setting that could work on fat and not on a person's muscles; that the Abtronic could flatten a person's stomach once and for all; and that 10 minutes' use of the Abtronic was equivalent to up to 600 sit-ups.

The Court also declared other claims made by Danoz Direct to be misleading or deceptive, based on the fact that the company didn't have reasonable grounds for making the claims.

The ACCC also sought refunds for consumers, and despite the court ruling that it didn't have the power to order this, Danoz Direct has asked customers who were misled by the advertising and bought an Abtronic to phone 1300 135 085 for a refund.

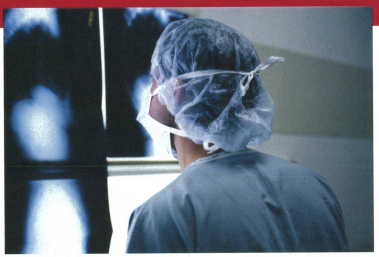
Danger in vintage gas masks

The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) has warned consumers against using vintage gas masks because they may well contain asbestos.

Despite a permanent ban on the sale of these masks since 1991, the ACCC recently found they were still available, mainly in army disposal stores. They consist of a full-face shield, hose and detachable metal canister, which contains an asbestos filter. The ACCC thinks consumers may buy them as a cheap alternative to more expensive breathing apparatus for tasks like spraying chemicals and sandblasting.

If you think you might have bought a mask that contains asbestos, you can either return it to where you bought it, or dispose of it by obtaining an 'asbestos bag' from an asbestos removal company and giving it to an approved waste transfer station.

You can have a mask tested if you're unsure, but at around $150 to do that it's probably cheaper to buy more conventional breathing apparatus.



SELF-INSURANCE FOR HEALTH

On average, even with the government's 30% rebate, most people's hospital claims won't exceed their premiums until they're in their 60s. As more and more younger people become disillusioned with the declining value of their private health insurance, they're opting out in large numbers.

In Australia nobody's uninsured — there's always the public system — but if you don't have private insurance and want treatment in a private hospital, you'll be paying for it yourself. But will you be able to afford it? To make sure, some people are opting out of the funds and insuring themselves — putting money aside from each pay packet to deal with these things as they come up. This is self-insurance, which would probably make many people feel more secure than no insurance. There are drawbacks:

- Until you've put a reasonable amount aside, you have to rely on the public system.
- Government policies mean people over 30 who leave private hospital cover and want to rejoin later will find it substantially more expensive.
- You'll have to pay the Medicare surcharge if you earn more than $50,000 (singles) or $100,000 plus $1500 for each child after the first (couples and families).
- And will you *really* have the discipline to save the money you used to pay into your health fund?

But there are some real advantages too:

- You won't be hit with the 10–12% administration costs the funds cream off the top of your premium.
- There's 20% tax rebate on medical and hospital expenses above $1500.
- You won't be subsidising people who claim more than you do.
- Best of all, the money's still yours — it's there in an emergency.

Finding the best investment for self-insurance needs some thought. Ideally, you need somewhere that's safe, with low fees and a reasonable return. You need access to your money at short notice, and it's a good idea to keep your savings up with healthcare inflation, which is about double the rate of normal inflation. That's a big ask for any investment.

For many people, putting this money regularly into your mortgage with a redraw facility will get the best effective return. It's very safe and it's tax free, though you need to leave yourself with a lump sum when you pay off your mortgage. Other options include electronic accounts, cash management trusts, various interest-bearing deposits, balanced investment funds or a combination of these.

yourletters

Lost digital images

We used our digital camera with a brand-new 256 Mb compact flash card on a recent holiday to the UK and Ireland. About halfway through the trip, we turned the camera on to view our photos and the readout showed we had "no image": about 40 photos were suddenly missing. We took a couple more test photos before switching to our old-faithful (film) camera.

When we returned to Australia we tried to get the lost photos retrieved. The retrieval program showed there had indeed been some 40 photos but they couldn't be opened. (The two later test photos were unaffected.) The camera manufacturer couldn't tell us for certain what had gone wrong, or whether the problem was with the card or the camera.

Is this a common occurrence?

C Bray
Balgowlah Heights, NSW

Losing digital images isn't uncommon: it can be just one or a few images that are corrupted or lost, or all of them at once.

Possible reasons include:

- *Magnetic or electrical interference (for example, from speakers or mobile phones).*
- *Extreme heat (don't leave your camera in a car) and cold. And condensation can form if you leave an air-conditioned hotel or restaurant and go outside into a hot, humid environment.*
- *Turning the camera off, taking the card out or taking a further picture before a picture you've taken has been fully written to the card.*
- *Using a battery towards the end of its charge.*
- *A problem with reading the card (which means the pictures are still there, but the camera doesn't realise it).*
- *A fault in the memory card's directory.*
- *Accidentally pressing the 'delete all pictures' button or reformatting the card.*

If you realise you've lost digital pictures, don't take any more photos — your images are probably still there, but by taking more photos you might overwrite them.

Find a data or digital photo recovery service to see if you can get the images back (it's up to you whether it's worth what they charge). There are also computer programs that claim to recover corrupted or deleted image files — they could be worth a try, but we haven't tested them. When you've successfully retrieved them, or have exhausted all attempts to do so, reformat the card (refer to your camera's instruction manual).

With a digital camera you're likely to have all your photos on just one memory card (unlike a film camera where you have several rolls of film) and if something goes wrong you lose everything. To lessen the risk, you could use more than one card (something to consider when you're duty-free shopping); get images printed (or copied to CD) as you go and post them home; or upload the important ones to the internet (internet cafes sometimes have memory card readers available).

THUMBS UP!

- When a part on her 30-year-old **LADY SHAVER** broke, Kris de Vries was told by various retailers it was most likely too old to be replaced. But she wrote to **REMINGTON** anyway, and it mailed the part to her free of charge.
- **ATHLETE'S FOOT** at Brookvale, NSW, cheerfully replaced Heidi Muller's expensive brand-name sports socks, which wore through the heel after only four months' use.

Warranty cards

I recently bought a new mattress with a five-year warranty, dependent on my filling in and returning a form. Aside from being overly personal and objectionable, it's a blatant marketing survey. To me, a guarantee should be just that: five years or whatever from date of purchase, and not conditional on a marketing ploy.

L Mortlock
Kingscliff, NSW

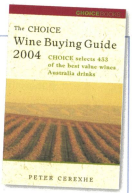
The good news is you don't have to fill in those little warranty cards at all — they're just a way for the manufacturer to get your details and know you bought the product. You're still covered by any warranties, including any from the manufacturer (express warranty) and the warranty the law gives you (statutory warranty).

Of course, you need to keep your receipts or other proof of purchase in case you want to claim, but don't feel all is lost if that little card is still at the back of the drawer when your toaster, bicycle or mattress goes bung.

LETTER OF THE MONTH

We want to hear from you — your experiences help our research and often let other readers know abouts scams and rip-offs. Positive outcomes you've had to a complaint you took to a manufacturer, retailer, importer or tradesperson interest us too. Address these letters to *Thumbs up* at the address on page 50.

To thank you for writing to us, CHOICE awards a prize of a CHOICE Book to the 'Letter of the month'. This month's winner, L Mortlock of Kingscliff, NSW, receives *The CHOICE Wine Buying Guide 2004*, or any other book of their choice from *Consumer Bookshelf*, page 30.



We're sorry we don't have the resources to answer all your letters personally, and in the magazine we may edit them or print only an extract. See page 50 for how to reach us.

Enjoy a weekend jog, or maybe you're a serious runner? We put 22 pairs of shoes to the test to find the best for your feet.

Fancy a jog around the block?

IN A NUTSHELL

- **If you run a lot,** *safe and comfortable shoes are vital to reduce running injuries.*
- **Several tested shoes** *have a durability and comfort edge. However, a shoe needs to fit your feet well, so still try on the top performers before you buy.*
- **There's been a lot** *of publicity about running shoe makers' approach to ethical manufacture. If you want to know which brands you can feel relatively guilt-free about buying,* *see page 10.*

It's estimated that around 40–50% of runners or joggers will be injured in any one-year period. Of these injuries, about a half to three quarters will be overuse injuries — directly related to the impact of repetitive stress on ligaments, tendons, joints and the lower back.

Considering that the force running puts on your ankles is between three and five times your body weight, it's perhaps no surprise that experts think running shoes play a part in the development of injuries. Poorly fitting or worn-out trainers, in particular, may increase your risk of running-related injuries.

NATURE'S SHOCK ABSORBERS

One key to buying a safe and comfortable pair of trainers is to know what type best suits you.

The first thing is to find out whether you're a neutral runner, a pronator or a supinator. You can get an idea by comparing your wet footprints with *Your foot type*, far right. Checking out the wear pattern on your current pair of trainers can also provide a clue to what kind of runner you are.

By naturally rolling onto the inner edge of the foot as you walk or run, your feet do a great job of reducing the stress impact of these activities. Technically, this shock-absorbing process is called **pronation**.

But as always, you can have too much of a good thing. In running terms, feet that rotate inward too much are said to overpronate. Down the track, this can lead to several running-related overuse injuries. A likely sign of overpronation is excessive wear on the inside edge of the soles of your shoes. Your wet footprints may also tend towards the flat type (see *Your foot type*).

Depending on the degree to which you overpronate, you'll need either 'stability' or 'motion-control' shoes. Stability shoes are good for mild overpronators, while motion-control shoes are designed to correct more severe overpronation. Motion-control shoes are typically heavier and have more rigid sides.

Of the tested shoes, **BROOKS Adrenaline GTS IV** give the highest pronation control, while **REEBOK Premier Stability DMX, ASICS Gel-1080, NIKE Structure Triax, MIZUNO Wave Maverick 2** and **NEW BALANCE M855** give medium control. However, the **NEW BALANCE** had durability problems — see *Durability plus*, page 10.

On the other hand, if your feet don't roll inwards enough, you could be a **supinator**. This also puts you at risk of running-related problems because your feet may not be absorbing energy efficiently. Supinators tend to show excessive wear on the outside edge of the sole of their shoes.

Shoes that feature ample cushioning, to compensate for reduced shock absorption, are best for supinators — see the ones noted in *Safe landings*, below (except for the **BROOKS Adrenaline GTS IV**, which gives high pronation control and so wouldn't be suitable).

If you've got a normal footprint, 'neutral' or stability shoes will be best for you — there are some in the *What to buy* list, left, and see the table, page 12. Avoid motion-control shoes designed to control severe overpronation, as there's an added risk of injury.

If you're an overpronator but wear neutral shoes, excessive wear might be a problem as well as the risk of injury.

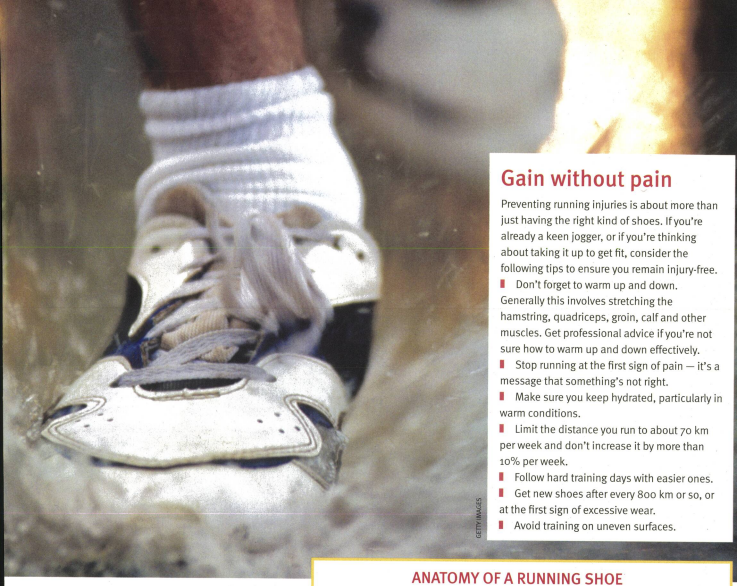
SAFE LANDINGS

Durable cushioning is critical for effective shock absorption. We measured this key safety and comfort

WHAT TO BUY

NIKE Air Pegasus (A)	TEST BUY	$160
REEBOK Premier Stability DMX (B)		$190
ADIDAS A³ Twin Strike (C)		$280
MIZUNO Wave Creation 4 (C)		$249
ASICS Gel-1080 (B)	TEST BUY	$160
FILA FGT-1000 (C)		$170
NIKE Structure Triax (B)		$180

(A) Good for supinators and neutral feet — see right.
(B) *Good for pronators — see right.*
(C) *Good for neutral feet — see right.*



GETTY IMAGES

Gain without pain

Preventing running injuries is about more than just having the right kind of shoes. If you're already a keen jogger, or if you're thinking about taking it up to get fit, consider the following tips to ensure you remain injury-free.

- Don't forget to warm up and down. Generally this involves stretching the hamstring, quadriceps, groin, calf and other muscles. Get professional advice if you're not sure how to warm up and down effectively.
- Stop running at the first sign of pain — it's a message that something's not right.
- Make sure you keep hydrated, particularly in warm conditions.
- Limit the distance you run to about 70 km per week and don't increase it by more than 10% per week.
- Follow hard training days with easier ones.
- Get new shoes after every 800 km or so, or at the first sign of excessive wear.
- Avoid training on uneven surfaces.

aspect before and after 150 km of running. The good news is that all the joggers tested provide a good level of runner protection.

The **ADIDAS Supernova Cushion**, **BROOKS Adrenaline GTS IV**, **NEW BALANCE 1022**, **NIKE AIR Pegasus** and **SAUCONY Grid Jazz 8** have the most cushioning and may particularly suit supinators and runners over 80 kg. However, the **ADIDAS** had durability problems — see *Durability plus*.

GREEK OR EGYPTIAN?

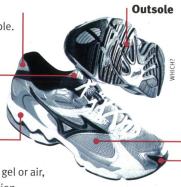
Feet, that is, and it depends on the relative length of your toes. Most commonly, your big toes are the longest — and these are 'Egyptian' feet. However, if your second toe is longest, you have 'Greek' feet. Those with big and second toes of the same length have 'square' feet, which is most common in Asia.

Some shoes better suit an Egyptian foot rather than a Greek foot — check the table. If you have square feet go for Greek-style shoes.

A SHOE-IN ...

To find the best running shoes for your feet we put 22 popular pairs through rigorous laboratory tests,

ANATOMY OF A RUNNING SHOE



WHICH?

YOUR FOOT TYPE

Look at your wet footprints to find your foot type. A normal or 'neutral' foot is on the left; flat feet (centre) tend to over-pronate, while high arches (right) can mean supination. See far left and the table, page 12, for shoes to suit your feet.

focusing on durability and comfort. We also recruited keen runners to road-test and rate the shoes in a 150 km run. See Notes 1–6 on page 12 for more details.

It's important to bear in mind that how well a shoe fits depends strongly on the individual. This means the top models may not be suitable for everyone: try them on before you buy.

DURABILITY PLUS

The best-wearing pair was the **ADIDAS A³ Twin Strike**. They rated excellent for durability overall, scoring 90% — they have very good abrasion and wear resistance, and flex. Importantly, they also keep their shock-absorbing cushioning ability.

The best shoes overall, **NIKE Air Pegasus**, are also among the most durable. Most of the other shoes tested have fairly good overall durability.

However, unless you can't find alternatives that fit you equally well, avoid the following shoes. Despite an overall good durability score, they were let down badly in one durability area:

- **ADIDAS Supernova Cushion** and **PUMA Complete Pryde Plus** — the outer soles of both wore out easily.
- **NEW BALANCE M855** — the quality of the materials in the forefoot of this shoe was judged to be relatively poor.
- The **REEBOK Premier Lite** was relatively disappointing in the durability of its insoles.

SWEATY FEET

Did you know that while running, each foot produces around 15 mL of sweat per hour? Shoes with inner soles able to absorb this amount of perspiration will be more comfortable. Unfortunately, most shoes were definitely below par in this respect. However, the **PUMA Complete Extol II** and **REEBOK Premier Stability DMX** were able to manage a good sweat-soaking job, so it's not impossible to make an absorbent runner. ■

GENDER BALANCE

All the shoes we tested were in men's sizes, but most of them are in fact unisex. Truly distinct women's shoes are made in a smaller width-to-length ratio.

Ethical manufacture?

The manufacture of running shoes is labour-intensive. And big-name shoe companies decrease production costs and increase profits by subcontracting out manufacturing to factories in developing parts of the world where labour costs are cheap.

The success of this strategy is reflected in the growth of shoe manufacture in Asia — up 424% during the period 1980–1995. In stark contrast, the growth in shoe manufacture during the same period was only 10% in Europe and 16% in the Americas.

However, a variety of international human rights and welfare agencies have raised concerns about working and pay conditions in countries where labour costs are low, and continue to actively champion the rights of these workers. Environmental concerns have also been raised about manufacturing processes.

So can you buy your next pair of joggers without guilt? To find out, European consumer organisations commissioned a report last year that surveyed and rated the ethical and corporate responsibility practices of the major multinational shoe manufacturers.

The study assessed the transparency of the companies — their openness to external scrutiny — as well as their environmental and social policies. When manufacturers didn't respond to the survey, researchers checked publicly available information to help assess the company. Here's a brief summary of the major findings.

SOME ETHICAL INITIATIVE

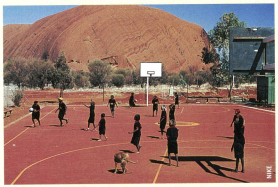
ADIDAS

Transparency: Provided good-quality information on all issues surveyed. Rated highly for transparency.

Environment: Environment policy focuses on the reduction of hazardous substances used in manufacturing, and also considers the environmental performance of its suppliers, and provides assistance to suppliers in environment management. Many factories have environmental management systems (EMS) certified to ISO14001 standards.

Social: High standards of labour rights; has installed a complete factory rating system with internal auditing and verification. Forms long-term relationships with suppliers and fosters improvements in their social performance.

Reuse-a-Shoe



As part of **NIKE Australia's** Reuse-a-Shoe program, in October 2003 it installed a basketball court made from old sport shoes for the Mutijulu community situated at the base of Uluru.

According to **NIKE**, the Reuse-a-Shoe program has recycled more than 15 million pairs of shoes and donated over 150 athletics courts and playground surfaces to disadvantaged communities around the world.

The Australian Reuse-a-Shoe program is also associated with ARMtour (Athletes as Role Models), a scheme that brings elite athletes to indigenous communities to speak to children about a healthy lifestyle, participation in sport and avoiding substance abuse.

As the program has just started, shoes (any brand) can currently only be donated at **NIKE**'s Melbourne city and Collingwood stores — but **NIKE** plans to expand the scheme.

LIMITED OR NO ETHICAL INITIATIVES

NEW BALANCE

Transparency: Fully participated in the survey, and considered a transparent company.

Environment: Environment policy and management system focuses on the elimination and reduction of toxic chemical use and hazardous waste produced at wholly owned factories, but other production impacts are also included. While **NEW BALANCE** requires its suppliers to be environmentally compliant, it didn't provide evidence of effective monitoring.

Social: The company has five manufacturing sites in the USA and one in the UK. However, its production relies increasingly on Asian suppliers. Despite taking steps to monitor and externally audit its suppliers, some negative reports have been made, mainly in relation to labour conditions in China.

NIKE

Transparency: Due to a pending lawsuit it didn't participate in the survey. Ordinarily it's regarded as a transparent company and it was possible to address all survey aspects on the basis of the company's public reporting.

Environment: Has a comprehensive environment policy that addresses production impacts and product life cycle. It has programs to ensure supply chain compliance to its EMS, and 25% of subcontracting factories have EMS certified by ISO14001 standards. It has almost completely phased out the use of PVC and sulphur hexafluoride. Programs to phase out the use of petroleum-based solvents are also in place.

Social: **NIKE** has taken steps to monitor its suppliers and have them externally audited. However, the current stage of independent verification isn't disclosed. Concerns emerge regularly, most relating to labour standards and conditions in China and Indonesia.

PUMA

Transparency: Fully participated in the survey and rated as a transparent organisation.

Environment: Environment policy focuses on banning or reducing hazardous substances from production. Has programs to control the environmental performance of its suppliers, but only some of them have EMS certified to ISO14001 standards. All shoes were PVC-free from 2003 on, and contain minimum levels of hazardous substances.

Social: The company has a code of conduct for labour standards and an auditing system for all subcontractors. However, no independent auditing is carried out. Several reports regarding human rights violations were made about the company overall in the last few years, but none concerned footwear production.

REEBOK

Transparency: Didn't participate in the survey, but transparency is good on labour policy. Less information is available on environmental policy.

Environment: **REEBOK**'s environment policy restricts the use of certain substances in manufacturing by its suppliers. Solvent and PVC-free production is nearly achieved.

Social: Has strong labour rights standards and takes steps to monitor its Asian suppliers, including external auditing. However, concerns have been raised about labour and wage conditions in China and Indonesia.

ASICS

Transparency: Participation in the survey was limited to sending the **ASICS** Code of Conduct for vendors and licensees. Only **ASICS'** environment policy and transparency could be rated. Transparency judged poor.

Environment: Limited environment policy disclosure, rather vague, but one research and development centre has its environmental management system certified to ISO14001 standards. Sport shoes are PVC-free. No information on supply chain environmental monitoring.

Social: No negative reports regarding sourcing conditions and labour standards at suppliers were found.

BROOKS

Transparency: Did not participate in the survey. Transparency judged poor.

Environment: Not possible to rate the company.

Social: No negative reports regarding sourcing conditions were found.

FILA

Transparency: Despite agreeing to participate in the survey, **FILA** didn't reply to the questionnaire within deadlines. Transparency judged poor.

Environment: Not possible to rate the company.

Social: Negative reports regarding labour standards at suppliers have been made on a regular basis in recent years.

MIZUNO

Transparency: Did not participate in the survey. Apart from some environmental information, transparency was judged poor.

Environment: All **MIZUNO**'s Japanese factories have ISO14001 EMS certification. No information on suppliers' environment monitoring or environmental impact of their production.

Social: No negative reports regarding labour standards at suppliers were found.

SAUCONY

Transparency: Didn't participate in the survey. Transparency judged very poor.

Environment: Not possible to rate the company.

Social: Production relies fully on Asian suppliers, but no negative reports on conditions were found.

	PERFORMANCE					EXPERT ASSESSMENTS		SPEC
	1 Overall score (%)	2 Durability score (%)	3 Comfort factors score (%)	4 Slip resistance score (%)	5 User trial score (%)	6 Pronation control*	Foot type**	Weigh (pair,
NIKE Air Pegasus	75	85	72	53	72	Neutral	Egyptian	694
REEBOK Premier Stability DMX	73	79	79	69	62	Medium	Greek	827
ADIDAS A³ Twin Strike **(A)**	72	90	61	64	69	Neutral	Greek	824
MIZUNO Wave Creation 4 **(B)**	72	76	72	60	69	Neutral	Greek	715
ASICS Gel-1080 **(B)**	71	81	63	69	72	Medium	Egyptian	649
FILA FGT 1000	71	83	65	49	70	Neutral	Egyptian	633
NIKE Structure Triax	70	73	67	69	71	Medium	Greek	738
NEW BALANCE 1022	69	71	69	73	67	Neutral	Egyptian	668
REEBOK Premier Lite	68	77	66	75	59	Neutral	Egyptian	685
MIZUNO Wave Renegade	66	87	48	69	64	Low	Greek	836
NEW BALANCE M 716 NS **(B)**	66	67	64	65	68	Low	Egyptian	695
PUMA Complete Extol II **(A)**	66	58	75	53	67	Low	Greek	671
ADIDAS Supernova Control	65	57	66	69	70	Neutral	Greek	667
MIZUNO Wave Maverick 2 **(B)**	65	71	57	64	68	Medium	Greek	700
SAUCONY Grid Jazz 8 **(A)**	65	73	61	60	62	Neutral	Greek	628
ADIDAS Response Control	64	57	64	67	69	Neutral	Greek	615
MIZUNO Wave Mercury 3 **(B)**	64	58	66	60	69	Neutral	Greek	662
NEW BALANCE M855	64	80	55	65	58	Medium	Egyptian	796
ADIDAS Response Cushion	63	55	69	71	62	Neutral	Greek	664
BROOKS Adrenaline GTS IV	63	65	56	67	69	High	Egyptian	657
PUMA Complete Pryde Plus **(A)**	60	49	67	56	63	Low	Greek	656
ADIDAS Supernova Cushion	59	36	65	67	72	Neutral	Greek	753

How to choose

- Go to a speciality store that caters to serious runners — it'll increase your chances of getting good sales advice.
- Find out if you're an overpronator, neutral or supinator — see *Nature's shock absorbers*, page 8.
- For the best possible fit, shop later in the day when your feet are larger (they swell during the day) and wear the same type of socks as you'd normally wear when running.
- Take along your old pair of trainers so that your wear pattern can be diagnosed.
- Try on a range of sizes. Your feet also get slightly bigger when you run, so your normal shoe size may not be the size you need for running.
- Ask if you can go for a trial jog around the block. If not, jog a little in the store.
- As a potential sign of adequate shock absorption, look for a heel that's at least 2 cm thick and fairly soft (but not excessively so).
- Make sure there's enough room in the toe box — your thumb should fit between the end of your toe and the top of the shoe.
- Check if there's enough room at the widest part of your foot. A good fit won't be too tight but will prevent your feet sliding around.
- The upper should be snug and hold your foot securely. Reject any shoe with an upper that irritates or seems to press in too tightly.
- If you're very loyal to a particular brand, be 'unfaithful' and try on some other brands — you may be pleasantly surprised.
- Don't assume a break-in period will improve the fit: running shoes should feel good straight out of the box.

* *See* Nature's shock absorbers, *page 8.*

** *See* Greek or Egyptian?, *page 9.*

† *For men's size 8.*

†† *Prices are recommended retail, as supplied by manufacturers in November/December 2003.*

ns *Not stated.*

(A) *Discontinued, but you may still find it in shops.*

(B) *Has been or soon will be discontinued and replaced with an updated model.*

1 Overall score

This is made up of:

- Durability: 30%
- Comfort factors: 35%
- Slip resistance: 5%
- User trial: 30%

2 Durability score

We arrived at an overall durability score by combining the following ratings:

- Tear- and flex-resistance tests of the upper materials.
- Wear resistance of the laces in different eyelets.
- Abrasion resistance of the insole.
- Flex and abrasion resistance of the outsole.
- Energy return and energy absorption of the heel.
- Adhesion between upper materials/midsole; midsole/sole; upper materials/sole and the adhesion of the tip.

3 Comfort factors score

This score is a combination of scores reflecting the performance of the shoes in the following technical assessments/tests:

- Longitudinal suppleness.

ONS		
Origin	Manufacturer / distributor	Price ($)††
China	Nike	160
Indonesia	Reebok	190
China	Adidas	280
s	Pacific Leisure	249
Japan	Asics Oceania	160
China	SM Brands	170
China	Nike	180
China or Vietnam	New Balance	190
Indonesia	Reebok	150
s	Pacific Leisure	239
Vietnam	New Balance	150
China	Puma	130
China	Adidas	180
s	Pacific Leisure	159
China	Apex Sports	140
China	Adidas	160
s	Pacific Leisure	189
China or Vietnam	New Balance	170
China	Adidas	160
China	Texas Peak	200
China	Puma	170
China	Adidas	180

- Shock absorption (heel) and energy transfer.
- Water absorption capacity of the insole.
- Expert bending assessment.

4 Slip resistance score

The slip resistance score indicates how well the shoes grip the ground overall. This may be important if you often run on slippery surfaces or surfaces with different friction characteristics.

5 User trial score

We recruited three runners per shoe and sent them on a 150 km run. At the finish line we asked them to assess the shoes for comfort and stability factors. We then combined these results for each shoe to get the overall user trial score.

6 Pronation control

Indicates how well experts thought the shoes would correct overpronation. 'Neutral' means the shoes don't control pronation. The other shoes have a low, medium or high ability to control overpronation.

Profiles

Models in the *What to buy* list are profiled in rank order from left to right. Prices are recommended retail, as supplied by manufacturers in November/December 2003.

NIKE AIR PEGASUS

Price: $160 BEST BUY

Suitable for supinators or neutral feet, under 80 kg.

Good points

- Good cushioning and comfort.
- Rated equal best in the user trial, third for durability and equal third for comfort factors.
- Supple.

Bad points

- Not very slip-resistant.
- Can feel a little unstable during speed running.

MIZUNO WAVE CREATION 4

Price: $249

Good for runners with neutral feet, 70–80 kg, or those who prefer firmer cushioning.

Good points

- Good durability.
- Rated equal third for comfort factors.

Bad points

- Lighter (under 70 kg) runners may find it heavy and the heel cushioning hard.

NIKE STRUCTURE TRIAX

Price: $180

Suits mild to heavy overpronators, over 80 kg.

Good points

- Good durability.
- Runners gave it an overall good rating in the user trial.

Bad points

- Lighter (under 70 kg) runners may find it heavy and the heel cushioning hard.

REEBOK PREMIER STABILITY DMX

Price: $190

Suitable for mild overpronators or neutral feet, over 80 kg.

Good points

- Good durability.
- Best in comfort factors assessment.

Bad points

- Runners found it heavy and the heel cushioning hard.

ASICS GEL-1080

Price: $160 BEST BUY

Suits mild overpronators or neutral feet, under 80 kg.

Good points

- Very good durability.
- Equal best in the user trial, but ...

Bad points

- ... runners found it rigid and lacking forefoot cushioning.

ADIDAS A³ TWIN STRIKE

Price: $280

Suits runners with neutral feet, over 70 kg.

Good points

- The most durable shoe tested.
- Runners described it as comfortable ...

Bad points

- ... but found it a hot and heavy shoe to run in.
- Runners thought this shoe not suitable for intensive running activity.

FILA FGT-1000

Price: $170

Suits runners with neutral feet, under 80 kg.

Good points

- Very good durability.
- Runners gave it an overall good rating in the user trial.

Bad points

- Not very good slip resistance.

Super fund regulator criticised

The government authority charged with regulating the majority of Australia's superannuation funds was criticised in a recent performance audit undertaken by the Australian National Audit Office (ANAO).

The Australian Prudential Regulation Authority (APRA) is responsible for supervising the financial stability of over 10,000 super funds that hold a combined value of $328 billion in members' funds and represent 63% of all Australian superannuation assets.

The ANAO found APRA had failed to provide risk ratings for approximately two thirds of the funds under its responsibility, and that the level of fund supervision within APRA varies significantly, depending on which division of the organisation has responsibility for a particular fund.

In its response to the audit APRA says the majority of funds that haven't been risk-rated are small, and although there's a large number of them they represent only a small proportion of the total value of super assets under its supervision. It says the trustees of these funds are risk-rated.

We'll keep an eye on how APRA addresses the findings of the audit, which it's promised to detail in its next annual report.

Car insurance premiums

Anne Tonkin from SA was pleasantly surprised about the car insurance premium for her new car.

"I had a Ford Capri for 12 years," she says. "Over the years, as it steadily depreciated, the comprehensive insurance premium kept on going up till it reached $526 when the car was only worth $5000. When I traded it in on a one-year-old Astra convertible worth $40,000, I was pleasantly surprised to find the increase in the annual premium would be only $31. However, it did make me wonder how premiums are determined if one written-off Astra is worth eight written-off Capris!"

Anne's experience isn't unique. In our latest survey of car insurance we found the average premium for a one-year-old Toyota Corolla (agreed value $17,000) to be $534, compared with $497 for a seven-year-old Corolla (agreed value $11,000).

The General Insurance Enquiries and Complaints Scheme (IEC) says the value of a vehicle isn't as significant a premium factor as you might expect. Only a small percentage of claims are write-offs — repairs make up a much greater proportion. Premiums are determined by risk, and in some senses older cars can be considered even riskier than newer cars. The reasons for this include:

- Older cars' parts can be harder to get and might be more expensive — some new vehicles can be relatively cheaper to repair.
- New cars are usually looked after more carefully and tend to be less likely to have an accident.
- As new cars age the risk of accidents begins to slowly increase. The vehicle can become the family 'runabout', with more family members using it.

If you need any information about insurance (apart from life insurance), contact the IEC on 1300 78 08 08 or go to www.iecltd.com.au.

MORTGAGE BROKER DISPUTES

The Mortgage Industry Ombudsman Service can help consumers to resolve disputes with mortgage brokers if they're members of the scheme. Compensation is limited to $100,000.

Contact: Mortgage Industry Ombudsman Service, Level 6, 50 Park Street, Sydney 2000; phone 1800 138 422 or (02) 9267 1000; www.acdcltd.com.au/mios.

With more than 50 varieties of canned tuna to choose from, we've found the ones that taste the best.

Fishy BUSINESS

Canned tuna's come a long way since it first rolled off the production line in 1903, but even 100 years ago it was an almost instant success. It's a convenient and cheap product that's quick and easy to prepare in dozens of different ways. Everyone has their favourite tuna recipe.

And it's no longer just plain old tuna. Canned tuna now comes with fancy flavours and sauces — we found around 70 of them. There's tuna with oven-dried tomatoes and basil, tuna with Asian-style chilli and hoisin sauce, tuna in zesty vinaigrette … the list goes on. These all come in single-serve cans or pouches. They're convenient for sandwiches and quick snacks, but can be an expensive way of buying tuna (see *Fancy flavours*, page 16).

We couldn't test all the flavoured varieties — whether you like them or not is very much a matter of individual taste — but we put 56 varieties of straight tuna through various tests.

HOW MUCH IN THE CAN?

How much fish do you get in the can? When we drained off the liquid and weighed the fish we found a few surprises. The two pouches (see *Pouches or cans?*, page 16) were all fish, with no liquid to drain off. But for cans the proportion of fish ranged from a generous 89% (**BI-LO Chunk tuna in vegetable oil**) to a mere 60% (**JOHN WEST Tuna in brine chunk style**). The 'no name' supermarket brands were just as likely to be well filled as the more expensive brands.

Labels now often give the percentage of fish (it'll be mandatory for manufacturers to provide this information after December 20 this year). However, the drained weight's a bit more than the actual weight of fish because some of the liquid's always retained, especially when it's oil and/or the fish is in small pieces. So we weren't surprised to find most cans appeared to have more fish than the label claimed, sometimes a lot more (see the tables, pages 18 and 19). But six products had *less*, and two of these (**JOHN WEST Tuna in brine, chunk style** and **JOHN WEST Tuna in springwater, chunk style**) more than 5% less.

TESTING THE TASTE

Two food technologists assessed and rated the tuna in each can for both flavour and appearance. While they found all of them would be OK for cooking, most

IN A NUTSHELL

- **All the tested tuna** *are OK for cooking, but some taste too fishy for sandwiches or salads (see* Testing the taste, *below left).*
- **There's not enough** *independent checking of 'dolphin safe' claims for them to be credible. Your best bet is to look for skipjack as the tuna species on the label — it's less likely to swim with dolphins than other tuna, particularly yellowfin (see* Friendly to dolphins?, *page 17).*

PURRFECT

In case you were wondering, we also had a look at some canned tuna for cats. We found two brands that were only tuna. ***FARMLAND*** *(39 cents for 170 g) was very obviously the dark meat that's mostly used for pet food. But* ***PURINA Fancy Feast*** *($1.03 for 85 g) looked like better-quality tuna than much of what's on offer for human consumption! (And costs much the same.)*

people would probably prefer the milder, less fishy brands for sandwiches and salads. See Note 1, page 19, for details of how they scored the tuna.

Like chicken, tuna has light and dark meat. Top-quality canned tuna should only have the light meat. The dark meat, which has a stronger, more fishy flavour, is used mostly for pet food (see *Purrfect*, left). Some cans had more dark meat and tasted fishier.

On the whole, the more you pay, the more likely you'll get top-quality tuna — but we found some notable exceptions. **OCEAN RISE Chunk tuna in brine** and **BLACK AND GOLD Tuna in brine** were among the cheapest but rated well for flavour and texture (see the table, page 19).

Some of the tuna we opened had 'off' flavours. While the tuna was safe to eat and might taste OK if cooked, it wouldn't be so good in a salad or sandwiches.

Off flavours are a sign of poor quality control. Tuna are often caught long distances from where they're processed. They're frozen at sea and should be kept cold enough until they're canned to prevent any spoilage. But without good temperature control rancid flavours develop and bacteria can grow. The canning process ultimately kills any bacteria, but retains the histamine that's produced as the fish decomposes, as well as any rancid off flavours.

According to the international standard, the histamine level in canned tuna shouldn't exceed 200 mg per kg. Fortunately none of the tuna tested came anywhere near this level. Only two had detectable histamine — both less than 20 mg per kg.

FANCY FLAVOURS ... LESS FISH

The many flavoured tunas on offer may be convenient for lunches on the run, but you might not always be getting much tuna for your money. The prices we found ranged from **COLES Tuna in springwater with sundried tomato and basil** at $1.39 for 100 g of fish to **JOHN WEST Tuna with oven dried tomato and roasted onion** at $4.12 for 100 g. (For comparison, the plain tunas ranged from 43 cents to $2.60 per 100 g.)

Almost all the ones we looked at had the percentage of tuna on the label, so it's easy enough to check (if you've got good eyesight). On average they were 60% tuna, but this varied from 86% in **GREENSEAS Tuna with traditional French dressing, GREENSEAS Tuna with oven dried tomato and herb dressing** and **GREENSEAS Tuna with zesty lime and black pepper dressing** to a meagre 31% in **COLES Chinese style flavoured tuna in olive oil**.

POUCHES OR CANS?

Some tunas come in a plastic pouch instead of a can. Canned food's been around now for about 200 years, but plastic pouches are relatively new. They're more expensive than cans — a one-person serve (85–100 g) is at the top end of the price range in this test. They're also not as durable and the food doesn't last quite as long — but there are some advantages:

- They're easy to open by tearing from one of the nicks along each side.
- They're less messy than cans because there's little or no water or oil and they don't need draining. This and their light weight make them great for picnics and bushwalking.

EAT MORE FISH

In Australia we eat on average only 26 g of fish per person per day (compared with 157 g of meat). Nutrition experts say we should be eating a lot more.

This is because fish contains omega-3 fats, which we don't get much of from other foods. There's strong evidence that omega-3s help to prevent heart disease and strokes, and they may also help to prevent some cancers.

The National Heart Foundation recommends eating at least two fish meals a week. All fish is good, but some types (fatty fish) are especially high in omega-3s — and these include canned tuna. We

Mercury

There's been a lot of concern about mercury in tuna. It occurs naturally in the environment and fish absorb it from seawater as it passes through their gills. The highest levels are found in predatory fish such as shark, barramundi and southern bluefin tuna, which tend to be big, long-lived and near the top of the food chain.

Mercury's a powerful neurotoxin — in the nineteenth century hatters really did go mad because they were exposed to mercury used in the production of felt. Unborn babies have been thought to be particularly at risk because their rapidly developing brain is likely to be much more sensitive to mercury exposure than brain tissue in older children and adults.

However, a recent study that focused on the Seychelles, where fish is a major component of the diet, found no evidence that children's brain development was hindered by exposure to mercury. And other recent research suggests that the mercury in fish is in a form that makes it a lot less likely to be toxic than scientists previously thought.

Our food regulator, Food Standards Australia New Zealand, has advised that canned tuna is safe in any case because the smaller, short-lived species now used for canning accumulate a lot less mercury than the southern bluefin that was used in the past.

Friendly to dolphins?

Tuna, particularly yellowfin, often swim with schools of dolphins, and some tuna fishing methods catch the dolphins at the same time, killing or injuring them. Claims that tuna is 'dolphin safe' or 'dolphin friendly' supposedly mean these methods weren't used.

However, according to our sister organisation, the US Consumers Union, there's no iron-clad guarantee that dolphins haven't been harmed, despite what's written on the side of the can. There's no universal and independent verification of such claims, for example by observers who board fishing boats or make surprise visits to canneries to inspect captains' logs.

When we asked the major Australian manufacturers about the 'dolphin safe' logo we got mostly vague responses. One assured us that all incoming shipments to its canneries must be accompanied by a 'dolphin safe' certificate signed by the seller and also a signed captain's statement certifying that the fish is 'dolphin safe'. But what credibility do these documents have when there's no independent inspection?

If you buy skipjack it's more likely to be 'dolphin safe' than yellowfin. Dolphins don't normally swim alongside the smaller skipjack tuna.

should probably be getting at least 210 mg a day of omega-3s. So if you ate a tuna sandwich for lunch most days you'd be doing well.

Although rich in omega-3s, canned tuna is otherwise quite low in fat. So if you're watching kilojoules, tuna in brine or springwater is a good bet. If you're watching salt, though, check the nutrition information on the label. Tuna in 'springwater' doesn't necessarily have less salt than tuna in brine (see *Fishing yarns*, below) and tuna in oil isn't necessarily low in salt either.

FISHING YARNS?

Fishermen have a reputation for tall stories, and some of this exaggeration seems to have rubbed off onto canned tuna labels. Here are a few we spotted:

- According to the labels, "Safcol are the tuna experts, the only company who use exclusively fresh Northern Bluefin tuna … the most prized and delicious tasting tuna." So you might think this is the same northern bluefin tuna (*Thunnus thynnus*) that's much prized in Japan for sashimi and worth up to $30 per kg before it's even left the boat — unless of course you happened to know that in Australia, it's legal to use the same name for the much cheaper tongol tuna (*Thunnus tonggol*). And Safcol's claim to be "South Australian born and bred" certainly doesn't refer to the tuna, considering it's all "canned from fresh tuna" in Thailand.
- Anyone concerned about salt might pick **COLES Chunk style tuna in water** because it claims to be "Reduced Salt". But with 375 mg of sodium in a 100 g of fish, it's actually saltier than over a third of the tunas canned in brine.
- And you'd reasonably expect 'springwater' to have less salt than brine — but half of the 14 tested tunas in springwater had as much as or more salt than the least salty one in brine (**PARAMOUNT Chunk tuna, pure yellowfin in brine**).
- The prize for imaginative interpretation of the Food Standards Code goes to **COLES**. Despite the code requiring the percentage of any 'characterising ingredient' to be stated on the label, **COLES** told us it doesn't believe it's required to state the percentage of fish in its **BI-LO, COLES** and **FARMLAND** canned tuna. We're stupefied by this interpretation of the regulations and think most consumers will be too.

FYSSHE DAYES

Four hundred years ago, failing to eat fish at least twice a week could be unhealthy in more ways than one. In 1563, the English Parliament decreed that Wednesdays and Fridays were to be 'fysshe dayes' — and the penalty for eating "fleshe" on a "fysshe daye" was a fine of £3 or "three months close imprisonment".

Brand (in score order, with tuna type footnoted when stated)	1 Score out of 5	2 Stated % of tuna	3 Actual drained % of tuna	4 Total fat (%)	4 Omega-3 fats per 100 g (mg)	4 Sodium per 100 g (mg)	Origin	Stated net weight (g)	Price per 100 g, drained ($)*
TUNA IN OIL									
GREENSEAS Premium yellowfin chunks in olive oil blend **(A)**	5	65	72	10.0	450	420	Thailand	180	1.46
GREENSEAS Premium yellowfin tuna European style olive oil **(A) (B)**	5	70	100	13.5	121	280	Thailand	85	2.60
JOHN WEST Tuna slices in vegetable oil	5	70	67	8.1	ns	250	Thailand	125	1.99
SAFCOL Northern bluefin tuna in canola oil **(C)**	5	70	84	5.0	ns	250	Thailand	95	1.35
SEAKIST Tuna, sandwich in oil	5	70	88	11.5	ns	330	Indonesia	100	1.42
SIRENA Classico tuna in oil, Italian style **(D)**	5	74	82	7.0	ns	550	Thailand	95	2.02
SOLE MARE Tuna in olive oil, chunk style	5	76	82	15.7	ns	540	Thailand	95	1.33
BI-LO Chunk tuna in vegetable oil	4	ns	89	11.2	ns	293	Thailand	95	0.68
BI-LO Sandwich tuna in vegetable oil	4	ns	86	11.2	ns	293	Thailand	185	0.49
BLACK & GOLD Tuna in oil	4	70	77	8.2	ns	395	Thailand	185	0.80
COLES Chunk style tuna in olive oil	4	ns	84	5.5	100	390	Thailand	95	1.28
COLES Sandwich style tuna in olive oil **(A)**	4	ns	86	5.5	100	390	Thailand	95	1.29
COLES-FARMLAND Tuna chunks in vegetable oil	4	ns	79	11.2	ns	293	Thailand	185	0.50
HOME BRAND Tuna chunks in oil	4	70	80	8.2	ns	395	Thailand	95	0.71
NO FRILLS Chunk style tuna in oil	4	70	83	10.0	ns	500	Thailand	185	0.51
COLES-FARMLAND Sandwich tuna in vegetable oil	3	ns	87	11.2	ns	293	Thailand	185	0.50
GREENSEAS Sandwich tuna	3	ns	85	13.7	ns	440	Thailand	95	1.35
HOME BRAND Sandwich tuna	3	73	82	4.3	ns	395	Thailand	185	0.51
NO FRILLS Sandwich tuna in oil	3	70	79	16.0	ns	553	Thailand	185	0.52
OCEAN RISE Sandwich tuna in oil (Aldi)	3	70	85	13.7	ns	440	Thailand	185	0.46
PORT VIEW Sandwich tuna in oil (Aldi)	3	70	82	4.6	ns	319	Ecuador	185	0.71
SAFCOL Northern bluefin tuna, sandwich style **(C)**	3	70	88	3.2	ns	360	Thailand	95	1.32

There's tuna ... and there's tuna

Several different species of the tuna family end up in cans. Some manufacturers name the species on the label, but most don't. Twenty years ago, when CHOICE last looked at tuna, the species most likely to be in the can was southern bluefin. But this time we found yellowfin, skipjack, tongol, or what's labelled as 'northern bluefin' tuna.

Southern bluefin is now much too expensive to find its way into cans. It's getting scarce and its flavour and darker colour make it very popular in Japan for sashimi. The same goes for genuine northern bluefin.

However, in Australia 'northern bluefin' is a name that can be given to tongol (see *Fishing yarns?*, page 17). Tongol is a smaller species of tuna, particularly found along the Thai coastline. Its meat has an almost white colour and a very mild flavour that makes it particularly suitable for canning.

The most likely tuna to end up in a can is skipjack, followed by yellowfin. Skipjack's one of the smaller species and also the most abundant. The meat has a darkish colour, sometimes slightly pinkish, and a more fishy taste than some other tuna species. When no specific species is mentioned on the label the fish is most likely to be skipjack or a combination of skipjack and yellowfin. Yellowfin are bigger than skipjack and found throughout the tropical Pacific. The meat is light in colour and mild in flavour.

TAMARA GRAHAM

Brand (in score order, with tuna type footnoted when stated)	1 Score out of 5	2 Stated % of tuna	3 Actual drained % of tuna	4 Total fat (%)	4 Omega-3 fats per 100 g (mg)	4 Sodium per 100 g (mg)	Origin	Stated net weight (g)	Price per 100 g, drained (§)*
TUNA IN WATER									
GREENSEAS Tuna chunks in springwater	5	ns	76	0.9	ns	160	Thailand	95	1.30
JOHN WEST Tuna in springwater, sandwich style	5	70	73	0.9	300	140	Australia	100	1.57
JOHN WEST Tuna slices in springwater	5	70	68	1.1	ns	130	Thailand	125	1.94
SAFCOL Northern bluefin tuna in springwater **(C)**	5	70	67	0.4	ns	150	Thailand	425	0.91
SIRENA Tuna in springwater **(D)**	5	74	76	0.2	ns	425	Thailand	95	2.02
TRIDENT Tuna in springwater, premium chunk	5	79	81	0.2	ns	265	Thailand	95	1.31
WEIGHT WATCHERS Premium yellowfin tuna in springwater **(A)**	5	ns	80	0.9	ns	160	Thailand	95	1.53
COLES Tuna chunk style in water **(A)**	4	ns	77	5.0	20	375	Thailand	100	1.11
GREENSEAS Tuna chunks **(B) (C)**	4	85	100	0.6	160	295	Thailand	85	1.90
JOHN WEST Tuna in springwater, chunk style	4	70	62	1.8	700	170	Australia	425	1.11
PARAMOUNT Chunk tuna, pure yellowfin in springwater **(A)**	4	76	71	1.1	ns	227	Thailand	85	1.26
HOME BRAND Tuna chunks in springwater	3	73	75	0.8	ns	120	Thailand	95	0.66
PARAMOUNT Flaked sandwich tuna, pure skipjack **(E)**	3	70	84	<1	ns	228	Thailand	170	0.79
SEAKIST Tuna chunks in springwater	3	65	66	0.8	300	235	Thailand	425	0.81
TUNA IN BRINE									
BLACK & GOLD Tuna in brine	5	70	79	1.3	ns	360	Thailand	185	0.81
GREENSEAS Tuna chunks in brine	5	ns	68	1.3	ns	360	Thailand	180	1.41
JOHN WEST Tuna in brine, chunk style	5	70	60	2.3	800	350	Australia	425	1.09
OCEAN RISE Chunk tuna in brine (Aldi)	5	75	74	0.6	ns	694	Ecuador	185	0.68
PARAMOUNT Chunk tuna, pure yellowfin in brine **(A)**	5	ns	71	1.1	ns	227	Thailand	85	1.28
SEAKIST Tuna chunks in brine	5	65	70	0.8	300	335	Thailand	425	0.80
SEAKIST Tuna, sandwich in brine	5	70	79	0.8	ns	335	Indonesia	100	1.47
BI-LO Chunk tuna in brine	4	ns	75	1.1	ns	500	Thailand	185	0.47
BI-LO Sandwich tuna in brine	4	ns	77	1.1	ns	500	Thailand	185	0.48
COLES Chunk style tuna in brine **(A)**	4	ns	86	1.3	220	500	Thailand	100	1.16
COLES Sandwich style tuna in brine **(A)**	4	ns	74	1.3	220	500	Thailand	95	1.12
COLES-FARMLAND Tuna chunks in brine	4	ns	78	1.1	ns	502	Thailand	185	0.50
GREENSEAS Tuna chunks in brine	4	ns	75	1.3	ns	360	Thailand	95	1.30
HOME BRAND Tuna chunks in brine	4	ns	77	<1	ns	502	Thailand	185	0.44
PORT VIEW Chunk tuna in brine (Aldi)	4	63	66	<1	ns	580	Thailand	425	0.43
SAFCOL Northern bluefin tuna in brine **(C)**	4	70	72	0.4	ns	270	Thailand	425	0.92
SEAKIST Tuna, salad style in brine	4	70	82	ns	ns	ns	Indonesia	100	1.41
COLES-FARMLAND Sandwich tuna in brine	3	ns	80	1.1	ns	500	Thailand	185	0.51
GREENSEAS Sandwich tuna	3	ns	85	13.7	ns	440	Thailand	95	1.35
NO FRILLS Chunk style tuna in brine	3	70	81	0.5	ns	500	Thailand	185	0.50

* *Based on the price we paid in October 2003.*
ns *Not stated.*
(A) *Yellowfin.*
(B) *In a pouch.*
(C) *Tongol.*
(D) *Yellowfin/tongol.*
(E) *Skipjack.*

1 Score out of 5

The tuna was rated on flavour and appearance:
5: Light-coloured with a mild fishy flavour and little or no dark muscle. When described as 'chunks', no more than about 30% was detached pieces of fish.
4: Mostly light-coloured but has obvious dark muscle included and a stronger fishy flavour. When described as 'chunks', these are a bit mushy with a lot of loose fragments of fish.
3: Very obvious presence of dark meat with a strong fishy flavour, or has a slight off flavour (see *Testing the taste*, page 15).
2: A lot of dark meat with a strong flavour, or a very obvious off flavour.
1: Cat food.

2 Stated percentage of tuna

The manufacturer's claim of the amount of tuna in the can, as a percentage of all the contents. Under the Food Standards Code it will be mandatory to provide this information on the label after December 20 this year.

3 Actual drained percentage of tuna

We drained the contents of each can through a sieve and measured the weight of tuna, converting it to a percentage of the weight of the contents as a whole. We followed the method for canned tuna in the international food standard (*Codex Alimentarius*). Each result is an average of three cans bought from different stores. See *How much in the can?*, page 15, for more on this.

4 Total fat/omega-3s/sodium

The manufacturer's statement of the amount of fats and sodium per 100 g of drained fish, expressed as a percentage for total fat.

Serious problems in the credit reporting system could lead to consumers being unable to get a loan.

Credit BUNGLES

IN A NUTSHELL

- **Credit reporting** *databases are used by financial institutions to help decide whether you're a good credit risk — they list information including defaults on payments, bankruptcies and the number of times you've applied for credit. If there's a default on your report, chances are your loan application won't be approved.*
- **We asked over 50** *subscribers to apply for their credit report and found mistakes in about a third, showing not enough care is taken with this highly sensitive information.*
- **We're calling for** *a government inquiry into credit reporting.*

Over a four-year period Mr R was unable to get credit: one home loan and eight personal loan applications were rejected by various lenders.

Finally one lender named his bad credit report as the reason. Mr R found his bank had listed him as a 'clearout' — a debtor who doesn't pay and can't be located by the lender.

Some years ago, while working in a remote area, Mr R had got into in arrears with his credit card payments, but he'd paid it off a short while later. At no time did his bank tell him it would list this incident on his credit report. In fact he was still using the same credit card.

Mr R complained to the Banking and Financial Services Ombudsman (BFSO), who found in his favour and put Mr R's case in the BFSO annual report. Mr R's credit report was cleared and he received $2000 compensation.

DOES YOUR REPORT MATCH UP?

When you apply for credit the lender usually checks your credit report. It includes:

- Personal details such as your name, address, employment, date of birth and driver's licence number.
- Credit applications you've made.
- Overdue payments (defaults) and serious credit infringements (such as clearouts).
- Bankruptcy information.
- Court orders.
- Public record information such as directorships.

Existing defaults won't be deleted — even if you pay the debt, they'll only be marked as paid and a lender may still deny your loan application.

However, this information doesn't stay on your report indefinitely: credit applications and defaults are deleted after five years; serious credit infringements and bankruptcies are removed after seven years.

OVER 1.5 MILLION DEFAULT LISTINGS

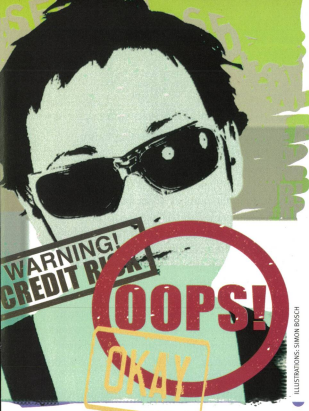
The most widely used credit reporting company in Australia is **BAYCORP ADVANTAGE**, formerly known as Credit Advantage and prior to that as Credit Reference Association of Australia. It holds reports on 13 million Australians, 1.5 million of which contain defaults.

The **TASMANIAN COLLECTION SERVICE** holds 400,000 reports, about 25% of which contain adverse information.

A new entrant is **DUN & BRADSTREET**, which opened its consumer database in July 2002.

All three are private companies, and they all also have debt collection businesses. As the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman (TIO), John Pinnock, says: "If you're chasing debt *and* control the credit reference system, this is an inherent conflict of interest." Debt collectors can use the credit reporting system as a tool, telling consumers they will be default-listed by their credit provider if they don't pay up — see *Third time lucky*, page 22.

The Privacy Act allows traditional credit providers such as banks to access these databases. The Office of the Federal Privacy Commissioner (OFPC), which regulates credit reporting, interprets the Act in a way that gives phone and utilities companies access. The OFPC has also determined that any company can access credit reporting if it allows customers



ILLUSTRATIONS: SIMON BOSCH

seven days or more to pay. This includes retailers, companies that rent out goods such as video stores, and service providers like legal and healthcare professionals.

While there are some consumer protection measures in the current law, they aren't stringent enough. For example, there isn't a minimum listing amount — some companies list defaults of as little as $50.

GUILTY UNTIL PROVEN INNOCENT

To correct a wrong default listing you usually need to resolve your complaint with the company that made the listing (see *What to do about a mistake*, right).

BAYCORP will investigate, but if the listing company says it's correct, **BAYCORP** accepts this without asking for documentation.

"Instead of the company having to prove that the consumer has done anything wrong, consumers need to prove that they're innocent," says Katherine Lane of the Consumer Credit Legal Centre (CCLC) in NSW. (Also see *Pay up first*, page 23.)

Consumers may only find out about a default listing when they apply for a loan. Years may have gone by and it can become very difficult to correct any mistakes.

Paul Gillett from the Victorian Consumer Credit Legal Service has seen a large number of those cases. For example, one of his clients noticed a default when applying for a bank loan. The credit provider was listed as Blue Ray, a name he'd never heard before. The credit reporting agency said it couldn't give him any information about Blue Ray. Only when the CCLS got involved did the reporting company tell him it was an orthodontist who had

Over 30% with mistakes

We asked 58 subscribers to get a copy of their **BAYCORP** report. Eight were told no report was recorded for them. If no new information has been added to your report in the last seven years you usually don't have one. Fifty received a report, of which 39 had credit information recorded, while the others only contained personal details.

34% of the 50 found one or more mistakes in their report. A clear majority of these (84%) were mistakes in personal details, such as a wrong licence number, wrongly spelled name or street name, addresses recorded they hadn't lived at, wrong date of birth and misspelled or wrong employment details.

BAYCORP told us this information is usually entered directly by the credit providers. If one lender enters details that are slightly different from information already in the report, such as differences in spelling, **BAYCORP** doesn't have systems in place that automatically flag this as a potential mistake that needs to be corrected.

The mistakes found could lead to 'mismatching': your bank may receive the wrong person's report, or other people's information could be listed on your report.

One such case was reported by the Office of the Federal Privacy Commissioner. The credit reporting company (not named in the report) cross-referenced 19 'aliases' to this consumer's report, implying he was committing fraud by obtaining credit using pseudonyms. Only after the consumer complained to the OFPC was his report cleared. The aliases belonged to a criminal who had recently been released from prison on fraud charges and who had a similar name.

WHAT TO DO ABOUT A MISTAKE

If there's a mistake in your **personal details or public record information**, contact the credit reporting company and request a correction.

If there's a **'clearout'** (serious credit infringement) listed on your file and you've never tried to avoid paying the debt, get legal advice.

For a wrongly listed **default** (overdue payment), first ask the company that listed it for a copy of the original account, showing dates of charges and the address at which the service was provided. Check whether the debt could be genuine. If it is, pay it and ask the company to notify the credit reporting company that it's been paid.

If it's wrong, complain to the company in writing, giving your reasons, and ask it to remove the listing. If there's a reference number on your report, include it; also supply copies of any documentation you have. If the company agrees with you, it needs to notify the credit reporting company to have your report corrected.

If it doesn't agree with you, write to the credit reporting company, asking it to mark the default as disputed, and take your complaint further:

- For banks or credit unions complain to the Banking and Financial Services Ombudsman or the Credit Union Dispute Resolution Centre. Both schemes can be contacted on 1300 780 808.
- For phone companies complain to the TIO: there's an online complaint form at www.tio.com.au, or call 1800 062 058.
- The Office of the Federal Privacy Commissioner can deal with all credit reporting complaints, though currently there's a long waiting list — see *Dealing with complaints*, page 22. Use the online complaint form at www.privacy.gov.au or call 1300 363 992.

You could also contact a consumer credit legal centre or service, especially if your claim gets nowhere with the above bodies:

- NSW: Phone (02) 9212 4111 or 1800 247 890, or go to www.cclcnsw.org.au.
- Victoria: Phone (03) 9602 3800 or 1800 803 800, or go to www.ccls.org.au.
- WA: Phone (08) 9481 7665 or 1800 627 662.
- In other states financial counsellors might be able to help: get a contact sheet at www.choiceextra.com.au, or call the ASIC infoline on 1300 300 630.

THIRD TIME LUCKY

In 1998 Jenny was late returning some videos. She didn't hear from the video store, but was contacted by a debt collector later that year.

"The bill was for over $100. I was confused that this could cost so much and disputed the debt at first, but paid it when I received the third notice," says Jenny.

The bills stopped coming, until in 2001 she borrowed some videos from the same store. "I received a letter demanding payment of $175 from a debt collector. This later went up to more than $300, and they also threatened to default-list me."

Although Jenny was sure she'd already paid, she decided to pay again as she couldn't find the documentation after searching through her records. "I just wanted to put an end to this," she says.

In 2003 she received a letter from another debt collector, again demanding payment of the debt. "At this point I got really angry. I showed them documentation and they apologised," says Jenny.

The moral: given the 'guilty till proven innocent' climate, keep your documentation.

treated his son. He hadn't been advised the default had been reported and didn't agree with the amount. After intervention by the CCLS the default was removed from his report.

THE PHONES KEPT RINGING

In the 12 months to September 2003, the TIO received more than 5100 complaints about debt recovery.

One of the reasons for the increase in complaints was the decision by Telstra to factor (sell) debts from over one million consumer and small business accounts for a fraction of their value to debt collection companies — including **ALLIANCE FACTORING**, a subsidiary of **BAYCORP**.

The TIO mentions a number of issues that kept coming up: "People were being pursued for debts Telstra had already agreed to waive — some of these cases had actually gone through the TIO. Sometimes the factor refused or failed to give the consumer access to an itemised bill, and even while there was a genuine dispute people were listed."

A year ago the TIO didn't see a problem with phone companies having access to credit reporting. Now he says, "I have concerns in relation to the factoring of debt and about the ease of access to credit reporting for some sections of the industry."

Telstra told us it's responding to the situation and has put processes in place to manage customer queries with the factor.

DEALING WITH COMPLAINTS

Banking and Financial Services Ombudsman Colin Neave deals with complaints against banks. He identified credit reporting as an emerging but not overly significant issue in 2002. To prevent an escalation in the number of complaints, he issued a bulletin and named things like the listing of debts without prior warning and the listing of debts that were less than 60 days overdue as problems. Subsequently the number of written disputes against banks went down.

The regulator (the Office of the Federal Privacy Commissioner) also deals with credit reporting disputes. However, because of resource problems caused by the unexpected influx of complaints in the private-sector area, the OFPC currently has a six-month waiting list for complaints.

The Commissioner, Malcolm Compton, says the OFPC actively manages the queue: "We have criteria to work out the order in which we handle complaints and this means that we deal with issues of grave consequence quickly."

However, the procedure can be confusing and frustrating. Many consumers complain first to the credit reporting company, which refers them to the OFPC if they aren't satisfied; the OFPC then refers them to the credit provider and only after that do you get on the OFPC waiting list. However, the OFPC says in certain circumstances it can waive the requirement to complain to the credit provider first.

REGULATION WITHOUT RESOURCES

David Tennant from the Consumer Law Centre in the ACT says regulation of the system isn't satisfactory: "The focus seems to be on what industry needs, not what consumers need. The issues are being dealt with in a low-key manner through the OFPC — it's like roughing up industry with a feather duster."

Last year the OFPC undertook credit reporting audits and found that some credit providers, among other things:

- Didn't inform applicants that their loan application had been denied because of adverse information in their credit report.
- Didn't notify the credit reporting company if consumers disputed default listings.

Those problems had also been listed in the previous audit report. According to the OFPC it doesn't have the power to force the companies to comply, but can only check up on them. In fact, according to the OFPC, it won't even be able to undertake any further credit reporting audits this financial year. The OFPC says it has chosen to focus its limited resources into the complaints area,

where it has greater powers to force companies to comply if necessary.

Says the Commissioner: "I'm concerned that any law that isn't enforced will bring the law in disrepute."

STANDING UP FOR YOUR RIGHTS

We're calling for a government inquiry into the credit reporting system. We have grave concerns about the way this system disadvantages consumers and doesn't protect their rights. An overhaul of the system is necessary. We think minimum requirements should be:

- Only debts of $500 or more can be listed.
- The onus is on the listing company to demonstrate existence of the debt and failure to pay.
- Consumers are to be notified when adverse information such as defaults and clearouts are added to their file.
- Disputed debts can't be listed while the dispute is being resolved.
- An appropriate external dispute resolution scheme funded by the industry to be established.
- Companies only to get access to credit reporting if they comply with consumer protection rules, adopt appropriate internal dispute resolution procedures and belong to the external dispute resolution scheme.

How to check your credit report

If you're ever refused a loan, ask if it's because of information in your credit report. Better still, check your report every few years.

- For a free copy of your report within 10 working days, contact **BAYCORP ADVANTAGE** at PO Box 964, North Sydney 2059; fax (02) 9951 7880, phone (02) 9464 6000 or go to www.mycreditfile.com.au. If you need it faster it'll cost you $23. Include your full name, date of birth, driver's licence number, current/previous addresses, phone number, your current/previous employers and the credit provider you most recently applied to.
- For **DUN & BRADSTREET** reports, download the application form at www.dnb.com.au or request your free copy from **DUN & BRADSTREET**, Attention: Public Access Centre, PO Box 7405, St Kilda Road 3004; fax (03) 9828 3447; express service costs $25.
- If you live in Tasmania also send a request to The Manager, **TASMANIAN COLLECTION SERVICE**, GPO Box 814H, Hobart 7001; enclose a copy of photo ID. Or you can pick up your file from one of its branch offices: phone (03) 6213 5599. It usually charges $9 but you can ask for an exemption of this fee if you've been refused credit or if your request is "related to the management of your credit arrangements". Many people may find the fee exemption wording on the form difficult to follow, plus it's hard to imagine a situation when the request wouldn't be related to the management of your credit arrangements.

Consumers need easy and free access to their credit report to ensure that mistakes can be corrected. We've contacted the Office of the Federal Privacy Commissioner, which told us credit reporting companies are supposed to give consumers their report free of charge and it's looking into the matter.

ALL IN A NAME...

If you've made a lot of credit applications your loan may not get approved, says Katherine Lane from the Consumer Credit Legal Centre in NSW. Unfortunately it might not even be your own doing, as happened to one of her clients: "He has a very common name and there was a very high number of applications on his report. He was sure he hadn't made most of them — it looked as though they might belong to other people with similar names," says Katherine.

See Over 30% with mistakes, *page 21, for more on this kind of mismatch.*

PAY UP FIRST

When Colin applied for a loan to cover an extension to his house, his lender told him it couldn't approve it until he settled a default for $381 listed by a department store.

Colin owned a credit card from the store but hadn't used it for years. In fact he'd been told by the company that the card had expired because of lack of use.

He phoned the company. "The man was very rude. He said it was my problem and that I'd have to pay. I asked him whether he could investigate the matter but he refused, and wouldn't even give me any information, such as the store in which I was supposed to have used the card."

Colin paid the debt although he was sure it wasn't his. "I was desperate because we needed the loan. We were sitting here with bills for renovations that we couldn't afford to pay," he says.

Some time later the company called Colin and informed him it had made a mistake.

A disposable camera can give you good photos — if you get the right one.

Cheap SHOTS

IN A NUTSHELL

- **The best** *of the disposable cameras are almost as good as a typical fixed-focus compact camera, and would be ideal to use when your 'real' camera isn't suitable or available.*
- **The worst** *produce pretty awful pictures and aren't worth bothering with.*
- **All brand-name** *disposables are recycled in a national scheme — almost seven million cameras have been recycled.*

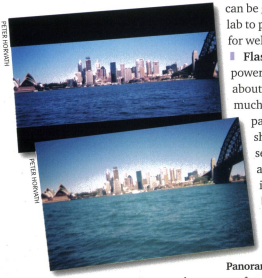
Disposable or single-use cameras are a boon for certain occasions: adventure and water sports, parties, on tables for guests to use at weddings, or when you're away from home and have forgotten your own camera. But which ones can you trust for that precious record of your snorkelling odyssey or your wedding guests' drunken antics?

We tested 29 disposable cameras of various kinds: basic outdoor, flash, underwater, APS, panorama and black & white. The benchmark we used was a mid-range fixed-focus compact camera.

WHAT TYPE OF CAMERA?

There's a disposable camera to suit most situations.

- **Film speed:** If you plan to shoot outdoors in low light levels, 800 ISO film speed is more likely to give good results. However, the sensitivity of 400 ISO film can be good enough for a decent photo lab to produce good prints, and it's fine for well-lit situations.
- **Flash:** The flash units aren't very powerful — their optimum range is about two metres and you won't see much beyond three, but they're fine for parties. Recovery times between shots range from two to eight seconds. 'Outdoor' models without a flash aren't really suitable for indoor use.
- **Panorama:** Panorama models give a wider print — ideal for landscapes. The **KODAK Advantix Switchable** and **RINO Miracle Panorama** let you switch between standard and panorama format.
- **Underwater:** The results for underwater cameras are disappointing — none provides good-quality prints, which is a shame because diving, snorkelling and other watersports are popular uses for a disposable camera.



The same photo from a good camera (top: Fujifilm Quicksnap Panorama) and one of the worst (Agfa LeBox Ocean) — a big difference.

That said, if you simply want a few snaps to show your friends or jog your memory a few years down the track, the results are probably better than nothing — especially if it's a bright, sunny day with little surface chop and crystal-clear water (also see *Tips for better underwater photography*, far right).

If you're mainly concerned about splashes — say white water rafting, yachting or just around the pool — you'll get better results with a good outdoor model. It'll probably handle a few small splashes while shooting, and you can keep it in a zipped plastic bag between shots.

- **Black and white:** Feeling arty? If you want black and white photos with a distorted sort of look, the **POLAROID Black White SL62** might suit. Its overall performance was poor, with very poor scores for the photo of tall buildings and for distortion. If you'd prefer somewhat more conventional black and white prints, you'd be better off getting one of the better colour film cameras and asking the developer to print the photos in black and white.

WHAT TO BUY

Standard (outdoor, no flash)

FUJIFILM QuickSnap Superia Outdoor ◀ BEST BUY ▶	$9.95
KODAK Max Daylight	$12.50

Flash

FOCAL Quickshots 400 Flash ◀ BEST BUY ▶	$16.00
FUJIFILM QuickSnap Nexia Superslim	$19.95
Can also take panorama photos:	
KODAK Advantix Switchable	$22.00
(The **FUJIFILM** *and* **KODAK** *with flash are APS format — see note 4, page 26.)*	

Panorama

FUJIFILM QuickSnap Panorama	$16.95*
Can also take standard photos:	
KODAK Advantix Switchable	$22.00

* *You only get 15 shots.*

NOT QUITE PICTURE-PERFECT

Overall, the best of the tested models produced pictures very close in quality to the compact camera we compared them with — with good developing, you'd probably be happy with the pictures.

All had some picture deficiencies, most noticeably a significant amount of vignetting (a darkening in the corners of the developed picture). It's a lens quality issue, and we didn't score it because it's common in many cheaper compact cameras as well.

The main characteristics we looked at were:

- **Picture distortion**

Most suffered from picture distortion, where straight lines appear to curve: the best was the **BI-LO Camera with Flash** (unfortunately this model was poor in all other aspects). But unless your subject has well-defined grid patterns or lots of straight lines, you probably won't notice it.

- **Resolution tests**

Few performed well in our indoor resolution test — a check to see how well the lens reproduced details of lines and figures under studio lighting. Best were the **KODAK Max Daylight**, **KONICA Film-in Super Wide Outdoor** and **KONICA Film-in Super Wide Flash**. The **AGFA Lebox Ocean** and **DIGITRON Outdoor** scored very poorly.

We also photographed an outdoor scene in strong daylight with tall buildings in the distance. Again, most cameras scored poorly for resolution, with only the **FUJIFILM QuickSnap Superia Outdoor**, **QuickSnap Panorama**, **QuickSnap Nexia SuperSlim** and the **KODAK Advantix Switchable** rating well.

- **Colour test**

Photos of people holding a colour chart in bright sunlight were used to check skin tones, contrast and colour saturation. Results were generally better, probably because this is as much a test of film quality as the lens. The **FOCAL Quickshots 400 Flash**, **KODAK Max Daylight**, **KONICA Neo Super Outdoor**, **RINO Miracle Panorama** and **SOULCOLOR Indoor Flash** were best.

WHAT ABOUT THE REST?

Models with a performance score of 45% or more (see the table overleaf) would be OK if nothing better was available and you really needed that shot. Those whose performance scored under 30% produced poor-quality prints that would be unlikely to satisfy even the least demanding photographer.

The **RINO Miracle Panorama** took reasonable photos, but had what appeared to be light leaks on the negatives. We couldn't locate a distributor for this model, and it may no longer be available.

EASY TO USE?

Almost all the viewfinders give a slightly blurry outlook. The **DIGITRON Outdoor** is the exception: it doesn't have a lens in the viewfinder, and gives a clear picture. Incidentally, if you normally wear glasses, including reading glasses, use them to look through the viewfinder — it makes a big difference with some cameras.

The shutter release should have a smooth action so you don't accidentally move the camera, and most were good in this respect.

All fit in a pocket or handbag with little difficulty, and some are very compact. The downside is that some of them are so small that you could easily put a finger over either the lens or the flash. All are designed for right-hand use.

The underwater models are the most bulky, making those finger-over-the-lens masterpieces less likely. They also come with a wrist strap.

PROFILES: TAMARA GRAHAM

Tips for better underwater photography

- Light doesn't penetrate far under water, so disposable underwater cameras without a flash will be at their rather limited best in the top couple of metres or so.
- The size and distance of things underwater can be deceptive due to distortion: you have to get very close to your target — although a Great White's probably large enough to enable you to keep more distance...
- The less water there is between you and the target, the less 'backscatter' you'll have (an effect caused by light reflecting off small particles suspended in the water).

	PERFORMANCE			FEATURES				SPECIFICATIONS	
Brand / model (in rank order)	1 Overall score (%)	2 Performance score (%)*	3 Ease of use score (%)	4 Type	Flash recovery time (sec)	Number of exposures	Film speed (ISO)	Manufacturer / distributor	Price ($)**
FUJIFILM QuickSnap Panorama	62	60	68	P	na	15	800	Hanimex	16.95
FUJIFILM QuickSnap Superia Outdoor	62	59	70		na	27	800	Hanimex	9.95
KODAK Max Daylight	61	56	73		na	27	400	Kodak	12.50
FOCAL Quickshots 400 Flash	58	56	61		4	27	400	Kmart	16.00
FUJIFILM QuickSnap Nexia SuperSlim	58	56	63	A	4	25	ns	Hanimex	19.95
KODAK Advantix Switchable	58	54	66	A, P	2	25	ns	Kodak	22.00
RINO Miracle Panorama	57	54	65	P	8	27	400	ns	15.00
KONICA Neo Super Outdoor	56	50	70		na	27	400	Konica	7.80
FOCAL Quickshots 400	55	47	73		na	27	400	Kmart	7.50
KONICA Film-in Neo Flash	54	50	64		8	27	400	Konica	15.00
KONICA Neo Super Flash	54	49	67		3	27	400	Konica	14.20
AGFA LeBox	52	47	65		na	27	400	Agfa	9.75
KONICA Film-in Neo	51	44	67		na	27	400	Konica	10.00
KONICA Film-in Super Wide Outdoor	50	46	60		na	27	400	Konica	18.00
AGFA LeBox Flash	50	46	59		4	27	400	Agfa	19.95
KONICA Film-in Super Wide Flash	49	46	57		7	27	800	Konica	23.00
SOULCOLOR Indoor Flash	48	43	61		3	27	400	Soul Pattinson	17.95
LIFETIME 35 mm Camera with Flash	48	39	70		7	27	400	Lifetime Camera	15.95
BIG W Super Snaps Outdoor	47	36	73		na	27	400	Big W	6.95
KODAK Max Water & Sport	47	41	60	U	na	27	800	Kodak	19.00
KODAK Max Flash HQ	46	40	61		4	27	800	Kodak	20.85
POLAROID Black White SL62	46	35	70	B	8	27	400	Polaroid	24.95
SOULCOLOR Outdoor	42	30	71		na	27	400	Soul Pattinson	11.95
POLAROID Outdoor Pops SL22	42	28	73		na	27	400	Polaroid	7.95
ACME Day / Night Camera with Built-in Flash	41	28	70		3	27	800	Universal Wholesalers	12.10
POLAROID Waterproof SL32	40	27	70	U	na	27	400	Polaroid	12.95
BI-LO Camera with Flash	36	25	61		8	24	400	Bi-Lo	19.95 **(A)**
AGFA LeBox Ocean	32	16	70	U	na	27	400	Agfa	12.50
DIGITRON Outdoor	31	15	68		na	24	ns	ns	5.95

* *The Canon Prima 76 was the fixed-focus compact camera used for performance comparison. Its performance score was 61%.*

** *Prices are recommended retail, as supplied by manufacturers in October 2003.*

na *Not applicable — no flash.*

ns *Not stated.*

(A) *Price includes free processing at Bi-Lo stores.*

Recycling

The **DIGITRON Outdoor** had traces of another picture of a tree and a house at the bottom of the shot we took of the Sydney Harbour Bridge. The **RINO Miracle Panorama** appeared to suffer from light leaks, as it had red tints on parts of the photos. It (along with some other models) was also held together with black sticky tape. What's going on?

Recycling of disposable cameras is widespread and very effective at reducing waste, with valuable parts like lenses and flash mechanisms being recycled up to six times. The Photo Marketing Association (PMA) national recycling scheme, which collects the old cases through photo developing shops, has recycled almost seven million cameras since it began. **KODAK, FUJIFILM, KONICA** and **AGFA** take back their own cameras for remanufacture, while cases from other brands are shredded for plastic scrap.

Another form of recycling is 'reloading' — as opposed to remanufacturing — where third-party companies (not the original manufacturer) collect cases for reloading with new film and rebranding. Four of our cameras (the **BI-LO Camera with Flash, DIGITRON Outdoor, LIFETIME 35 mm Camera with Flash** and **RINO Miracle Panorama**) appear to have been 'recycled' this way — hence the black sticky tape.

As we found, the quality of reloaded cameras is questionable — packaging defects, flash failures, dust or dirt on the prints, light leaks and unwanted pictures on the film are among the main problems.

1 Overall score

This is made up as follows:

- Performance: 70%
- Ease of use: 30%

2 Performance score

The performance tests measured distortion and resolution of lines and figures at close, medium and distant range (70% of the score), and colour reproduction (30%). See *Not quite picture-perfect*, page 25, for more.

3 Ease of use score

This takes into account the shutter release, how the camera's designed to be held, its portability and the viewfinder.

4 Type

P = Takes panorama photos.
A = APS format film — all the others are standard 35 mm format. Disposable APS cameras don't offer any particular advantages over those with 35 mm film and developers may not be as readily available.
U = Underwater.
B = Black and white film.

PHOTOS: TAMARA GRAHAM

Water with attitude...

... but do you need it, or are the marketers simply hard at work again?

IN A NUTSHELL

- **Bottled water** *with added vitamins and minerals won't do much for your diet: what you get in it is no substitute for fruit and vegetables.*
- **Forget drinking eight** *glasses of water a day: recent research shows there's no scientific evidence for the recommendation. Around six large glasses of almost any fluid should be enough. And you* ***can*** *drink too much water — see page 29.*

Once just drinking water was enough to make you appear health-conscious, but now a new generation of waters-with-the-lot make ordinary water look positively dull.

Slick and expensive marketing campaigns and jargon-loaded marketing-speak — which says a lot but in reality tells you little — encourage us to believe these new pumped-up water drinks are almost essential.

But when you look past the image to the actual product, is there anything special to be had, or would you just be helping the company to carve out another wedge of the already crowded billion-dollar beverage market?

We asked the experts and took a close look at this new generation of waters — some with a focus on sport, others apparently after the average person who spends more time walking around the shops than hiking up a mountain. Our verdict? The average person really doesn't need them.

WATER PLUS VITAMINS

The table on page 28 gives a rundown of the waters we looked at and what they had in them. Most of them could be described as water with light flavouring, some electrolytes and either artificially or only lightly sweetened.

The big selling point, though, is the added vitamins and minerals — and they don't really amount to much in the grand scheme of a healthy diet.

Around 10% of the recommended daily amount of calcium or iron is typical, for example. And often only about 25% of what you need of vitamins like some of the B group and vitamin C. Not exactly diet-changing stuff — especially when you consider that you're talking about drinking a bottle of around 700 mL to get even that much.

As one expert said to us, they're in no way a substitute for getting your vitamins and minerals from fruit and vegies in an overall healthy diet, and just drinking plain water. As everyone is becoming increasingly aware, the advantages of fruit and veg go way beyond a few vitamins and minerals: there are hundreds of phytochemicals (plant chemicals thought to have beneficial health effects) in them, not to mention the fibre.

Sure, these drinks will make a contribution to your intake of the limited range of the things they provide, but they won't make you or your diet healthy in some magical fashion. For most people, don't waste your money.

WHAT IF YOU EXERCISE?

If you're an active person — maybe you run or swim a bit, play sport socially or head to the gym a couple of times a week — do these waters have any advantages for you?

According to the sports dietitians at the Australian Institute of Sport, a recreational exerciser like this can get what they need from plain water. And at the other end of the spectrum, the AIS says if you're an elite athlete, or if maintaining your best possible performance at all times is important to you, you'd be best to use a proper sports drink (such as **GATORADE** or **POWERADE**) to maintain

		NUTRIENTS		1 ELECTROLYTES		2 MINERALS					3 VITAMINS					
Name (in alphabetical order)	**Flavour**	**Energy** (kJ / bottle)*	**Sugars** (g / bottle)*	**Sodium** (mg / bottle)	**Potassium** (mg / bottle)	**Calcium**	**Magnesium**	**Zinc**	**Iron**	**Chromium**	**Thiamin**	**Niacin**	**Pantothenic acid**	**B_6**	**Biotin**
AQUAVETA	Lemon	266	15.4	14	ns	✓		✓	✓						
AQUAVETA	Lime	287	16.1	14	ns			✓	✓					✓	
AQUAVETA	Orange	276	15.4	14	ns	✓									
MIZONE SPORTS WATER	Lemon / lime / mandarin / passionfruit	344	20.0	20	ns							✓	✓	✓	
POWERADE SPORTS WATER	Lemon / lime / mandarin	312	17.8	85	99										
PROPEL FITNESS WATER	Lemon-lime / orange	420	25.9	14	0							✓	✓	✓	
RIDE	Citrus / mandarin	360	20.0	40	45			✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
SPRING VALLEY TWIST	Lime / mandarin	330 **(A)**	19.5 **(A)**	22.5 **(A)**	ns	✓									
WATERPLUS	Lemon / mandarin / peach	10	0	41	41	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	

WATCHING YOUR WEIGHT?

Water has no kilojoules and achieves everything the average person needs from a drink. If you choose a 'sports water', be aware that while some are artificially sweetened and so have virtually no kilojoules, the sugars in others mean the energy can be as high as 420 kJ per bottle (see the table, above, for details). Of course, that's generally still fewer than, say, a soft drink or sports drink, if you're looking for something flavoured.

optimum hydration. They have appropriate levels of electrolytes (sodium and potassium) to be absorbed quickly and replace losses, plus the carbohydrate level in them is more suitable for refuelling during intense exercise.

However, you don't need sports drinks, according to the experts, unless you exercise at moderate to high intensity for about an hour or more.

So what about 'sports water' instead of plain water for recreational exercisers? It seems that light flavour and even the lower levels of electrolytes in them have been shown to increase the amount people drink when exercising, compared to plain water.

So the AIS dietitians reckon that, while water on its own is fine, if drinking one of these sports waters means you're likely to take in more fluid, that's probably a good thing. It's known that in general people don't drink enough when they exercise — no matter how light or strenuous it is. ■

Water myths

A recent review by an eminent US physiologist (see right) put to rest many myths about drinking enough water:

- **MYTH 1: By the time you get thirsty you're already dehydrated.** Not true: you'll feel thirsty before your body reaches a state that falls into the category of dehydration.
- **MYTH 2: If your urine is dark, you're dehydrated.** In most instances this doesn't signal dehydration, though it does reflect a lower (but probably normal) urinary volume.
- **MYTH 3: Lots of water keeps your kidneys' filtering rate up.** In fact, the rate at which the kidneys filter is only reduced in very severe dehydration — such as when you've already lost 5% of your body weight.
- **MYTH 4: You can't drink too much water.** Well, actually you can — see right.

E	Folate	Size (mL)	Manufacturer / distributor	Price ($)**
		700	Cadbury Schweppes	2.95
		700	Cadbury Schweppes	2.95
✓		700	Cadbury Schweppes	2.95
✓		800	Frucor Beverages	1.99
✓		710	Coca-Cola Amatil	1.98
✓	✓	700	Cadbury Schweppes	3.30
	✓	500	Zenergy Functional Beverages	3.30
✓		1500	Cadbury Schweppes	2.78
✓	✓	710	Sanitarium	1.99

* *See* Watching your weight, *for left.*

** *Prices are what we paid per bottle in October/November 2003. They may vary between supermarkets, convenience stores and garages.*

ns *Not stated.*

(A) *All figures are based on the size of one bottle, except for Spring Valley Twist, where half a bottle (750 mL) is used for better comparison.*

1 Electrolytes

Sodium and potassium are lost during exercise, but only need replacement after 2–3 hours of it. If you exercise for shorter times, their main benefit is they may encourage you to drink more than you would of plain water.

The AIS says the levels of electrolytes in sports waters are adequate for moderate exercise, but for more intense exercise a sports drink is more useful — they typically have higher levels.

2 Minerals

Drinks with minerals in general contain only about 10% of the daily recommended dietary intake (RDI) per serve, though some are higher.

3 Vitamins

These drinks contain a varying range of vitamins, but typically give you between 25% and 40% of the RDI for each per bottle. However, some vitamins in some drinks are as low as 10% (vitamin E, **WATERPLUS**) and as high as 500% (vitamin C, **MIZONE Sports Water**) of the RDI.

The amounts are unlikely to fix a poor diet and there's little evidence to suggest that there's an exercise benefit in drinking vitamins during exercise — a healthy diet provides all you need.

How much water should you drink?

Most people are probably familiar with the advice to drink at least eight glasses of water a day, or maybe six to eight glasses. It's advice that slips just as easily off the tongues of health professionals as your next-door neighbour. Everybody seems to know it, but just how true is it?

The evidence for eight glasses

The accepted water wisdom in the US — to drink eight eight-ounce (about 250 mL) glasses a day — was recently blown out of the water by an eminent physiologist. After an extensive review, he could find little scientific evidence even to suggest where this advice originally came from. His conclusion was that it's probably more than most people need and that many appear to be getting along quite healthily with less.

The new Australian Dietary Guidelines include the advice to drink 'plenty of water' — no specific advice on amounts is given, as it will vary from person to person. In general, though, the experts who put together the guidelines consider an adult in a temperate climate needs two and a half to three litres of fluid a day (depending on your size and level of activity).

So how much water?

In real life this doesn't mean endless glasses of water — in fact the food you eat contributes about one litre to the total, and your body produces another 250 mL when it uses the food, leaving you with only about 1.25–1.75 L to actually drink. That's only about five to seven large glasses (each 250 mL or one cup).

And the really good news is that almost any fluid counts — see right. Sometimes it's said that tea and coffee don't because caffeine is a diuretic, but in fact the evidence suggests that for tea and coffee at least, the effect is only slight.

It's only alcoholic drinks stronger than 10% that cause you to lose more fluid than the drink provides. As a rough guide, every 1 mL of pure alcohol you drink, you lose 10 mL of fluid in urine. So if you drink a 125 mL glass of wine (12.5% alcohol) you'll lose about 150 mL of fluid — a net fluid loss. If you drink full-strength beer (5% alcohol), you'll lose about half the fluid, but the other half contributes to your daily fluid intake.

However, there are some good reasons for focusing on water as your main fluid once you've drunk enough milk for your calcium needs — water has no kilojoules, and it's cheap.

Can you drink too much water?

It doesn't happen under normal circumstances, but it can happen. Too much water means the body can't get rid of it fast enough, and the water in the bowel draws salt out of the blood. It's the low salt level that's dangerous, sometimes even fatal.

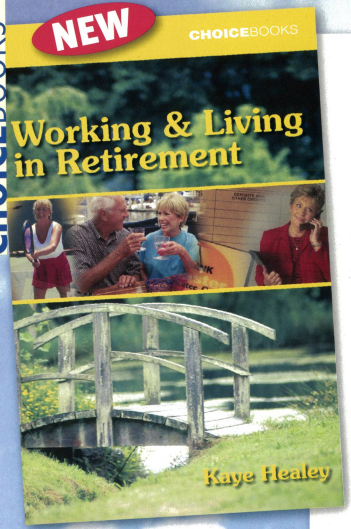
The AIS says this is rare, but it can happen to people who exercise for very long periods of time (two to three hours or more), drink a lot of water but don't replace lost sodium. Working out how much water you generally lose in an exercise session (by weighing yourself before and after) and trying to drink just enough to replace it is the best way of not overdoing it. (If you drank during the exercise, take that into account too when weighing yourself.)

Some medical conditions (such as some kidney conditions) can also make it easier to drink too much.

Almost everything counts

Although water is king, all these count towards your daily fluid goal:

- Water.
- Milk.
- Juice.
- Cordial and soft drinks.
- Sports drinks and sports water.
- Tea and coffee.



WORKING & LIVING IN RETIREMENT

Kaye Healey

Some Australians are entering a dynamic new era of retirement — quite different from previous generations, when retirement meant leaving the workplace at 60 or 65 to live out the last few years of life.

Now, with better healthcare and longer life expectancy the baby-boomer generation can expect to spend 20 to 30 years in retirement. While many won't have sufficient savings to afford the lifestyle they want, some are taking up the challenge and breaking new ground by working in so-called retirement. They're increasing their self-esteem by doing work they feel passionate about — and earning extra retirement income.

Retirement and work are no longer mutually exclusive terms. The workplace is changing, offering increasing opportunity for paid work in retirement for those who choose it and act now to prepare for it.

Working & Living in Retirement looks at a range of issues, including:

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- Preparing for an increased demand for mature-age workers
- Further education and personal growth

Working & Living in Retirement suggests options for a vibrant and useful post-retirement life.

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By the same author

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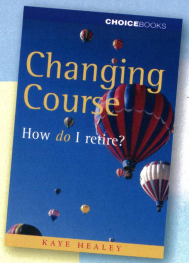

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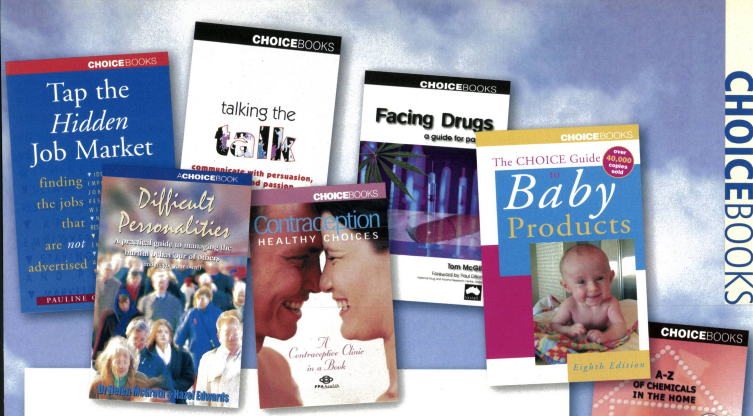

TAP THE HIDDEN JOB MARKET

Did you know that Australian Bureau of Statistics' June 2001 figures revealed only 17.2% of jobs are found through newspapers and internet sites? So, learn how to tap into the large number of hidden jobs. "...a commonsense and practical approach to job searching." *The Catholic Weekly*.

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What makes a difficult personality? How do you cope with or even change one? Are there 'difficult' people in your life? If so, this practical guide explains how you can make life around them more bearable.

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Stand tall and deliver your speech with confidence and conviction. Discover how to make effective presentations that will impress colleagues, family and friends.

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Deciding on your form of contraception can be difficult. But here's a book written by the experts, FPA Health, that explains what's available for men and women, the possible side effects, success rates, and even gives an idea of costs.

19.80 CODE: CONT

FACING DRUGS

Illicit drugs are part of today's society — many young people use drugs such as cannabis, amphetamines, ecstasy, LSD and even heroin. Families that claim to be immune from the dangers of drug use do so at their peril. "An important book for parents." *Good Medicine*.

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A-Z OF CHEMICALS IN THE HOME

The layperson's guide to the chemicals encountered in daily life. "If we as consumers wait for regulators to clean up our lives we'll be waiting a long time...if we don't buy goods with potentially bad things in them then the market should eventually respond with truly cleaner products." Norman Swan, *The Health Report*, ABC Radio National.

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Learn how to manage your career crises from the momentous, such as redundancy, to the minor, such as dissatisfaction with work. "A useful small book with lots of practical ideas packed in." *HR Monthly*.

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Healthy Women is a collection of interviews with 26 successful Australian women, focusing on how they balance and maintain their busy lives and health. "A fascinating account of real women's lives" *The Gladstone Observer.*

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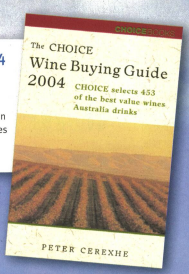
A plain-English guide to understanding money for every woman. "A straightforward, easy-to-read and inspiring book." *Personal Investor*.

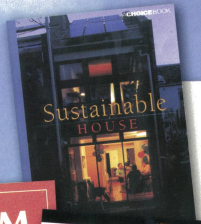
$19.80 CODE: MMMS

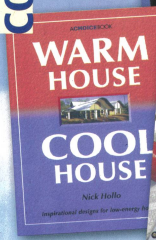
THE CHOICE WINE BUYING GUIDE 2004

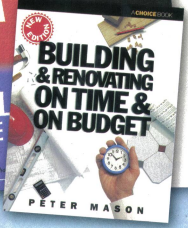
Now in its third year, this is established as *the* totally independent and reliable guide. Whether you enjoy reds, whites or champagnes, you'll find most of the 453 wines we tasted at your local bottle shop. The eight-page colour section features 15 wines specially recommended for their high scores and excellent value for money.

$30.00 **CODE: WG04**









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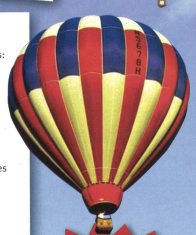

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MICHELLE HAVENSTEIN

Jogger STROLLERS

Jogger strollers are better suited to exercising than shopping — but it helps if the wheels don't fall off!

ON TEST

Eight three-wheel jogger strollers in the $200–$300 range:

AUSSIE BABY T433 Walking Stroller
BABYLOVE Voyager Deluxe Jogger BL280
CHILDCARE Overlander CF3500
EIC LOVE N CARE Rapid Jogger BP 9003
MOTHER'S CHOICE 3 Wheel Tourer 242-MU
STEELCRAFT Swivelrite Jogger 36108
SWALLOW Bravo Three Wheeler
VALCO Renegade ATS N4031

Seven mums roadtested eight jogger strollers and rated their ease of use and their manoeuvrability in a variety of situations. We then tested them against the Australian standard (AS/NZS 2088:2000) for safety and durability.

Sadly, as is so often the case with baby product safety, there's still a way to go. Despite most of the strollers claiming to comply with the standard, four of the eight models had serious failures and aren't recommended.

THE FOUR FAILURES

- The **BABYLOVE**, **LOVE N CARE** and **MOTHER'S CHOICE** can trap an infant's head between the bumper bar (or tray) and the seat or footrest of the stroller, and therefore fail the standard. While this may be a remote risk if the child is properly strapped in, combined with other problems (see *What about the rest?*, page 34) it means we don't recommend buying them.
- Our durability test proved the undoing of two models: the **MOTHER'S CHOICE** and **VALCO** failed when their front wheel struts snapped off after 46 hours and 12 hours respectively.

Was it bad luck or a fundamental fault? To find out we bought a second sample of each: the **MOTHER'S CHOICE** developed a crack in the wheel strut (but didn't break), and the **VALCO's** front wheel snapped off after less than five hours. Apart from being a waste of money, there could be an accident if you were jogging with one of these strollers when the wheel fell off. They're not recommended.

(The strollers all underwent durability tests, one of which was conducted at a faster speed than the standard specifies — 10 km/h instead of 5 km/h — as these strollers are intended for jogging.)

UNLIKELY RISKS

- The **AUSSIE BABY** and **STEELCRAFT** have a head entrapment risk only when the bumper bar is taken lower than its lowest marked setting (which was possible on the samples we bought — if you can, check this before you buy).

IN A NUTSHELL

- **None of the tested strollers** *is completely problem-free, but four pose such an unlikely risk they're worth considering — see the* What to buy *list, below.*
- **Two didn't survive** *our durability test — twice. See* The four failures, *far left.*

WHAT TO BUY

CHILDCARE Overlander CF3500	$300
AUSSIE BABY T433 Walking Stroller	$300
STEELCRAFT Swivelrite Jogger 36108	$289
SWALLOW Bravo Three Wheeler	$299

WANT MORE INFO?

For What to look for *when buying a stroller, see the article in CHOICE, August 2002, or go to www.choiceextra.com.au and click on Aug 02 under 'Jogger strollers' in the index.*

When you're using the boot cover on the **STEELCRAFT** and **SWALLOW**, an infant's head could get trapped between it and the side of the seat. However, it's extremely unlikely this would happen.

In all these four cases the entrapment hazard is nowhere near where the infant's head would be — if they're securely strapped in. If you buy one of these strollers, make doubly sure your child always is.

The standard requires the locking mechanisms (that keep the stroller open) to be inaccessible to the child, or at least to require a certain amount of force — representing more strength than a young child has — to operate.

The **CHILDCARE** and **LOVE N CARE** failed this test. However, in both cases the child would have to operate both mechanisms at once — a very unlikely occurrence. As such, we think the **CHILDCARE** is still worth considering and it's in our *What to buy* list.

The **LOVE N CARE**, though, had already failed the head entrapment test in the standard and so isn't recommended. If its release mechanism covers were in place it would be harder and more time-consuming for the child to collapse the stroller, but whether or not you'd use the covers is another matter — our testers found them a nuisance.

THE USER'S VIEW

A swivelling front wheel makes all the strollers pretty easy to steer. However, manufacturers recommend you lock the front wheel when jogging, which makes them harder to manoeuvre round bends — trialists found the **AUSSIE BABY**, **BABYLOVE** and **STEELCRAFT** the most difficult in this respect. Despite this, these three were still rated OK overall.

The trialists' favourite, the **CHILDCARE**, handled well on all terrains and was generally considered easy to manoeuvre — less than half the trialists had problems with the front wheel fixed.

Other issues for non-jogging, out-and-about uses — like shopping — include:

- Getting through doorways — **AUSSIE BABY** and **STEELCRAFT** (the widest models) and **MOTHER'S CHOICE** (the longest model) — presented some difficulties.
- Using the shopping compartment (**LOVE N CARE** and **MOTHER'S CHOICE** were considered the most difficult to access).
- When you've finished shopping, folding it up (**AUSSIE BABY** and **BABYLOVE** were the most difficult) and putting it in the car boot (**AUSSIE BABY** and **LOVE N CARE** were bulky and hard to lift).

Among those in the *What to buy* list, the **CHILDCARE** was rated 'good' and the other three 'OK' overall in the user trial.

Profiles

CHILDCARE OVERLANDER CF3500

Price: $300
Weight: 14.6 kg
Dimensions (W x L): 61 x 108 cm
Warranty: 1 year
Accessories: Rain cover, boot cover, leash (to attach your wrist to the handle when jogging, in case you lose your grip), tyre pump.
Features: Comfort pads on shoulder straps, several footrest positions.
User trial rating: Good

Tester comments:

- The folding release mechanisms are accessible to the child and possible (though unlikely) for them to operate — see left.

Trialist comment:

"Loved it — very stable and easy to use and manoeuvre. The only down point is poor access to the shopping basket."

PROFILES: TAMARA GRAHAM

WHAT ABOUT THE REST?

The more serious of the following problems are discussed further in the main article.

- The **BABYLOVE Voyager Deluxe Jogger BL280** ($229) failed the head entrapment test in the standard and the crotch strap also didn't meet the standard. Babylove says it will address these problems if the stroller goes back into production (it's been discontinued but you may still see it in shops).

The models in the *What to buy* list are profiled in order of their user trial rating. Prices are those provided by manufacturers in November 2003.

AUSSIE BABY T433 WALKING STROLLER

Price: $300
Weight: 12.7 kg
Dimensions (W x L): 65 x 109 cm
Warranty: 1 year
Accessories: Boot cover, leash.
Features: Comfort pads on shoulder straps, removable liner, zip pockets on side of canopy.
User trial rating: OK
Tester comments:

- Potential head entrapment — care needs to be taken that the bumper bar isn't adjusted past its lower marked limits (see *Unlikely risks*, page 33).

Trialist comment:
"Quite a nice stroller, with many thoughtful features such as the good-sized pocket at the back; but bulky and difficult to fold."
(Also see *The user's view*, far left.)

STEELCRAFT SWIVELRITE JOGGER 36108

Price: $289
Weight: 14.3 kg
Dimensions (W x L): 66 x 115 cm
Warranty: 1 year (3 months replacement).
Accessories: Boot cover, mesh cover, cushioned insert to support head, leash, tyre pump.
Features: Adjustable handle height.
User trial rating: OK
Tester comments:

- Potential head entrapment — care needs to be taken that the bumper bar isn't adjusted past its lower marked limits (see *Unlikely risks*).
- An entrapment hazard also exists if the boot cover is fitted, between it and the side of the seat, but it's unlikely.

Trialist comment:
"Good to manoeuvre but as it's quite wide and heavy can be difficult to get through doorways, etc. Nicely finished."
(Also see *The user's view.)*

SWALLOW BRAVO THREE WHEELER

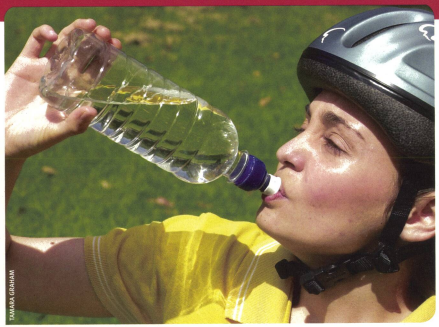
Price: $299
Weight: 14.4 kg
Dimensions (W x L): 61 x 110 cm
Warranty: 1 year
Accessories: Boot cover, leash, tyre pump.
Features: Removable liner, several footrest positions, zip pockets on side of canopy.
User trial rating: OK
Tester comments:

- An entrapment hazard exists if the boot cover is fitted, between it and the side of the seat, but it's unlikely.

Trialist comment:
" Manoeuvred well though doorways and in general ... [but] basket way too small."

- The **EIC LOVE N CARE Rapid Jogger BP 9003** ($279) failed the head entrapment test in the standard and the locking device (to prevent the stroller accidentally folding up) also didn't meet the standard. Users rated it equal worst.
- The **MOTHER'S CHOICE 3 Wheel Tourer 242-MU** ($299) failed the head entrapment test in the standard and our durability test, and users rated it equal worst. IGC says modifications to the tray will be made to eliminate head entrapment. The current model is being discontinued.
- The **VALCO Renegade ATS N4031** ($229) failed our durability test (see right) and users rated it equal worst. It's been discontinued but you may still see it in shops.

The Valco's front wheel strut broke on two samples in our durability test — after 12 hours and less than five hours.


PAMELA GRAHAM

REUSING WATER BOTTLES

A scare email that's been circulating for some months now has been warning people against reusing PET plastic water bottles, saying there's a risk of consuming a potential carcinogen, DEHA, which can leach into the drink from the plastic bottle. The email's information originally stems from the results of a student's masters project at a university in the US, which was pounced on by the media.

DEHA stands for di(2-ethylhexyl) adipate, a plasticiser that's added to some plastics to make them more flexible. It's incorrectly referred to in the email as diethylhydroxylamine.

According to the Australasian Bottled Water Institute, the Australian Soft Drinks Association and the Plastics and Chemicals Industries Association, DEHA isn't used in PET bottles in Australia, and nor is diethylhydroxylamine. Food Standards Australia New Zealand has also issued a statement saying the claims made about plastic bottles are incorrect.

Perhaps of more concern is the risk of germs when reusing water bottles. If you drink from the bottle, bacteria can enter it from your mouth, or from unwashed hands when opening the bottle. They then have the perfect aquatic environment in which to multiply and possibly leave you with a dose of gastroenteritis.

For this reason, rinse water bottles after each use and leave them to drain until completely dry. When you refill the bottle, refrigerate it if you're not going to be drinking it within the next two hours. And don't drink water from a refilled or previously opened bottle that's been sitting unrefrigerated in a car.

CHECKED YOUR FIBRE INTAKE LATELY?

We all know eating enough of both soluble and insoluble fibre is important to our health, and adults should be aiming for about 30 g a day. But how do you know if you're getting this much? Log on to www.choiceextra.com.au and try out our fibre quiz — you might be surprised to find out just how much (or little) is in your daily diet. Just click on 'fibre' under 'Food' in the index.

Salt under attack

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) in the UK, the body that advises both government and consumers on food safety, nutrition and diet, has come up with a refreshing proposal to reduce the amount of salt in people's diets. A high level of salt in the diet is linked to high blood pressure, which in turn is associated with heart disease and stroke.

The FSA has sought views on a new proposal that aims to convince manufacturers to reduce the amount of salt in a wide range of processed foods. Knowing the target level of salt that should be eaten, the FSA would list the amount currently in certain categories of food and specify the amount that therefore needs to be cut from each category. The next step would be to specify maximum levels for each food category, the first step towards possible regulatory control.

Consumers aren't excluded from responsibility, however, with targets for reducing salt added to food during cooking or at the table also taken into account.

Will saturated fat and sugar be next on their hit list? Will Australia follow suit? Stay tuned for the next exciting chapter.

PAMELA GRAHAM

Freed from the KITCHEN SINK

The first report from a new series of tests — 25 new models compared.

TOMASZ GRAHAM

IN A NUTSHELL

Water and energy efficiency *and ease of use showed the biggest differences between models, though one — the very expensive* **KLEENMAID** *— got a notably poorer wash score.*

Plenty of people nowadays think of a dishwasher as a necessity rather than a luxury, and the good news is you don't have to spend top dollar to get a top-performing machine. In fact, one of the cheapest dishwashers in our latest test, the **MAYTAG**, came top overall, while the **KLEENMAID**, the most expensive by far at $2399, was the equal worst.

Dishwasher models specify whether they take 12 or 14 place settings. What may surprise you is that this is less an indication of the dishwasher's capacity under real conditions than a means to get better energy and water efficiency ratings: the more settings it fits, the more efficient it should be, as it's washing more for the same amount of (heated) water.

While 14 settings are often used as part of the sales pitch, in past tests many 14-setting machines haven't washed as well — fitting it all in means the dishes can be too tightly packed. In this test, though, this wasn't always the case: the 14-setting **LG** performed well enough to get into our *What to buy* list. As with most 14-setting models, though, what you can really fit in depends more on your dinnerware than the dishwasher's specifications.

WHAT TO BUY

MAYTAG Jetclean MJD2000AAW	BEST BUY	$1099
MAYTAG Jetclean MJD3000AAW		$1299
WHIRLPOOL 6ADG7554WHM		$1695
WHIRLPOOL 6ADP5656WHM		$1399
BLANCO BFDW640W		$1299
BLANCO BFDW650S		$1599
BLANCO BSDW640S		$1549
LG LD14AT2		$1499
LG LD14AW2	BEST BUY	$999

A Best Buy is a good performer whose purchase and running costs combined are among the lowest in the test. In this case, the **MAYTAG** and **LG** Best Buys are also among the best performers. If environmental concerns are high on your list, one of the **WHIRLPOOL**s is your choice (see the profiles, page 38, for details).

Similar models listed (linked by a square bracket) are technically the same and will get the same scores in our tests, but may have different features or finishes (such as stainless steel vs white).

Profiles

The models in the *What to buy* list are profiled. Prices are those provided by manufacturers in November/December 2003. Similar models listed are technically the same and will get the same scores in our tests, but may have different features or finishes (such as stainless steel vs white).

MAYTAG JETCLEAN MJD2000AAW

BEST BUY

Price: $1099

MAYTAG JETCLEAN MJD3000AAW

Price: $1299

Good points

- Easy to use controls.
- Fast wash and half load options.
- Salt dispenser to soften water in hard-water areas.

Bad points

- None to mention

WHIRLPOOL 6ADG7554WHM

Price: $1695

WHIRLPOOL 6ADP5656WHM

Price: $1399

Good points

- Easy to use controls.
- Fast wash and half load options.
- Versatile basket design.
- Cycle progress indicator.
- If water and energy saving are your main concerns, it has the second-highest scores in the test for both (and therefore also the second-lowest running costs) yet still performs well.

Bad points

- None to mention.

BLANCO BFDW640W

Price: $1299

BLANCO BFDW650S

Price: $1599

BLANCO BSDW640S

Price: $1549

Good points

- Best wash performance.
- Fast wash option.
- Salt dispenser to soften water in hard-water areas.

Bad points

- Comparatively noisy.
- Second highest running costs over 10 years — less energy- and water-efficient than most in the test.
- Comparatively long 'normal' cycle time.

ANTHONY SAWERS

LG LD14AT2

Price: $1499

LG LD14AW2

Price: $999

BEST BUY

Good points

- Easy to use controls.
- Fast wash and half load options.
- Time remaining indicator.

Bad points

- Very large plates won't fit.

A dishy drawer

The **FISHER & PAYKEL Dishdrawer** lives up to its name: it pulls out like a drawer. Its design is great for many people with a disability, as it can be installed at a suitable height for easy access. It's also handy for smaller kitchens, as it takes up less room than a standard dishwasher (though you still need similar space in front of it to pull out the drawer).

TAMARA GRAHAM

Each drawer nominally takes seven settings, and you can stack two drawers on top of each other and run them independently to get the equivalent of a normal-sized dishwasher. It can also sit on top of a bench if required, although it'll need to be anchored.

It doesn't come cheap, though, with one seven-setting drawer priced at around $1000, and its energy and water efficiency scores were the worst of the models on test, giving it comparatively high running costs too.

Bought a Whirlpool lately?

In the process of testing we found the **WHIRLPOOL 6ADP5540** and **6ADP5656WHM** weren't performing to specification by more than our general leeway of 10%. The manufacturer repaired our machines (and the results are from tests after these repairs), but told us that some machines were sent into the marketplace with the wrong dataset and, while they tried to get the faulty machines back from retailers, some (like the two we bought) had already been sold.

The fault effectively means the affected machines use over 40% more energy than is claimed on the energy label. We asked if recall action had been launched, but **WHIRLPOOL** tells us it won't be recalling them. We've written to the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission with the aim of having a recall instigated.

In the meantime, if you've bought a faulty **6ADP5540** machine, you can tell if it's affected as it'll have an excessively long cycle time (over two hours) when set to 'normal' wash — much longer than is stated in the instructions. The **6ADP5656WHM** will give itself away by indicating on the front panel display that it starts on the main wash, rather than the prewash, in the 'normal' cycle. We don't know if the similar models are also affected (see the table for model numbers), but if you have one follow the same advice to check its operation.

If you think you've bought an affected machine or if you're unsure, contact Whirlpool on 1300 36 11 66 and make a service request. Although it should still be under warranty, make sure you're not charged to have it checked or the dataset replaced if required.

WHAT ABOUT THE REST?

If you find the **BOSCH, HAIER** or **FISHER & PAYKEL Nautilus** models for a good price, they'd also be worth considering — they weren't far behind the models in the *What to buy* list.

The **FISHER & PAYKEL Dishdrawer** scored poorly for both energy and water efficiency, but is one to consider if you have a disability or limited space in the kitchen. See *A dishy drawer*, below left, for more on this model.

The **ASKO**s scored equal lowest for ease of use, mainly because when fitting the standard place setting the plates nest together (see the photo below) and aren't well supported, and there's limited basket versatility. They're also comparatively expensive.

The **WHIRLPOOL ADP5540** and its clones can't accommodate large plates and bowls, and also don't have a very versatile basket design.

The **KLEENMAID** scored comparatively poorly for washing, yet is the most expensive in the test.

Plates aren't well supported and tend to 'nest' in the Askos (see above).

For people with a disability

An occupational therapist from the Independent Living Centre, NSW, assessed the dishwashers to see which ones were suitable for people with a disability.

If you have problems with your hands, wrists or arms, look for a light door with a latch that's easy to open and close, controls that are easy to turn and press, baskets that slide in and out easily and a filter with handles. The **FISHER & PAYKEL Dishdrawer** would be most suitable.

If you're vision-impaired, look for controls that are easy to read (large and well-spaced), with labels in a contrasting colour. Positive feedback such as lights and/or beeps are helpful, as are well-defined baskets. None of the models tested was found to be ideal for someone with vision impairment.

For those in a wheelchair, a single-drawer **FISHER & PAYKEL Dishdrawer** installed at an appropriate height would be the most suitable.

None of the models is ideal for someone with cognitive impairment, but the **ASKO**s and **HAIER** have the simplest controls.

What to look for

Decide whether you'd prefer cold or hot-water connection. A hot connection can speed up some program times, but check the recommended maximum hot water inlet temperature — if yours is too hot you'd probably need a tempering valve, which may make it not worthwhile. If you connect your dishwasher to cold water only you have more control over how you wash: you can use more programs more effectively and efficiently, as well as wash more heat-sensitive items. None of the models in the test lets you connect to both hot and cold water.

Check the energy rating label — the more stars the better, with six indicating the highest efficiency. The standard now says manufacturers must use the 'normal' program to get the label; formerly they could choose any program, which meant energy labels weren't really comparable. Some models tested under the old standard are still for sale, so check the fine print for which program was used: it may be a different one from the program used for a machine you're trying to compare it with.

Measure your under-bench space to make sure you buy a model that fits, leaving space around it for ventilation.

If you rinse dishes before putting them in, a dishwasher with a 'fast wash' option may well give you perfectly adequate (and cheaper) results.

If it takes you days to fill a 12- or 14-setting machine, seven-setting machines are available. They don't necessarily use less water and energy, but they do take up less space.

Check that your normal dinnerware will fit without overcrowding or being hit by the spray arms. Take items such as a regularly used large dinner plate and a tall glass with you to the shop to check that they fit at the same time.

Make sure the filters are easy to reach, remove and clean.

Check that the dishwasher has all the programs you'll want to use. If you like to use enzyme-based detergent, look for a 'bio' or economy program that washes at around 50°C.

If you live in an area with hard water, check for a salt dispenser.

USEFUL FEATURES

Height-adjustable baskets (usually the top basket) and removable racks allow for more versatility when loading, as do removable or folding tines (see the table, page 41, for which models have them).

An anti-nesting grid (preferably removable) sits on top of the cutlery basket to stop the cutlery from bunching together.

Child-safe detergent dispenser and door lock.

An anti-flood device activates the water supply valve and drain pump if there's a water leak.

A fault display helps you to identify simple problems, such as blocked spray arms, that you may be able to fix yourself and avoid unnecessary service calls. It also warns you when a fault is serious and not to attempt repairs yourself.

Fan-assisted drying can improve drying by removing condensation from inside the dishwasher.

Half load option or load sensing, to adjust water use and program times for a smaller load.

A covered heating element will protect items that fall on it from damage, and stop food scraps being burnt onto it.

Brand / model (in rank order)	PERFORMANCE 1 Overall score (%)	2 Washing score (%)	3 Drying score (%)	4 Ease of use score (%)	5 Energy efficiency score (%)	6 Water efficiency score (%)	5 Energy used (kWh)	6 Water used (L)	7 No (dB)
MAYTAG Jetclean MJD2000AAW	81	75	88	97	68	77	1.37	19	48
MAYTAG Jetclean MJD3000AAW	81	75	88	97	68	77	1.37	19	48
WHIRLPOOL 6ADG7554WHM	80	75	79	88	82	81	0.91	17	47
WHIRLPOOL 6ADP5656WHM	80	75	79	88	82	81	0.91	17	47
BLANCO BFDW640W	79	80	90	84	62	70	1.58	21	54
BLANCO BFDW650S (ss)	79	80	90	84	62	70	1.58	21	54
BLANCO BSDW640S (ss)	79	80	90	84	62	70	1.58	21	54
LG LD14AT2	79	77	93	72	70	77	1.31	19	47
LG LD14AW2	79	77	93	72	70	77	1.31	19	47
BOSCH SGS4072AU	77	77	94	69	63	69	1.52	22	46
BOSCH SGU4025AU	77	77	94	69	63	69	1.52	22	46
HAIER WQP12-BFE **(A)**	76	76	83	69	76	73	1.09	20	48
FISHER & PAYKEL Dishdrawer DD603 (m) **(B)**	75	75	94	80	53	60	1.88 **(B)**	25 **(B)**	47
FISHER & PAYKEL Dishdrawer DD603 (ss) **(B)**	75	75	94	80	53	60	1.88 **(B)**	25 **(B)**	47
FISHER & PAYKEL Dishdrawer DD603 (ww) **(B)**	75	75	94	80	53	60	1.88 **(B)**	25 **(B)**	47
FISHER & PAYKEL Dishdrawer DD603i **(B)**	75	75	94	80	53	60	1.88 **(B)**	25 **(B)**	47
FISHER & PAYKEL Nautilus DW920 (Bk)	75	71	90	66	68	75	1.36	20	51
FISHER & PAYKEL Nautilus DW920 (ss)	75	71	90	66	68	75	1.36	20	51
FISHER & PAYKEL Nautilus DW920 (ww)	75	71	90	66	68	75	1.36	20	51
ASKO D3100	74	69	81	55	77	87	1.06	15	46
ASKO D3100 (ss)	74	69	81	55	77	87	1.06	15	46
KLEENMAID DW17W	74	60	88	89	64	74	1.49	20	43
KLEENMAID DW17X	74	60	88	89	64	74	1.49	20	43
WHIRLPOOL 6ADP5540	74	70	80	55	85	78	0.79	18	51
WHIRLPOOL 6ADP8540IX	74	70	80	55	85	78	0.79	18	51

MORE INFO ONLINE

If you're a personal CHOICE subscriber, this month you can try out our online 'compare a dishwasher' tool. Type in what you're looking for in a dishwasher and it'll find models that suit your requirements. Go to www.choiceextra.com.au and click on 'compare a dishwasher' under 'dishwashers' in the index.

The Bosch models have a handy foldable rack that lets you sit cups above dinner plates, below the top basket.

Models linked by a square bracket are technically similar (see What to buy, *page 37).*

* *'Normal' cycle.*

** *Prices are recommended retail, as provided by manufacturers in November 2003.*

ns *Not stated.*

ss *Stainless steel.*

(A) *This model has been discontinued but you may still find it in shops.*

(B) *Water and energy use, price, running costs, size and place settings are for two Dishdrawers, to make results comparable with the other models. You can buy just a single drawer: models DS603, DS603 (ss) and DS603 (ww). Bk = black, i = integrated, m = iridium stainless steel, ss = stainless steel, ww = white.*

1 Overall score

This is a combination of the following scores, weighted as follows:

- Washing performance: 30%
- Drying performance: 25%
- Ease of use: 15%
- Water consumption: 15%
- Energy consumption: 15%

2 Washing score

We assessed how well the machines could remove food such as spinach, egg yolk, baby cereal and tea stains that had been dried on overnight, and without being rinsed first. This is based on the current Australian standard, which has changed since our previous test of dishwashers.

3 Drying score

This reflects how dry the dishes were 30 minutes after the 'normal' cycle finished. During that time the door was left closed.

Running cost ($ / years)	9 FEATURES				SPECIFICATIONS								
	Height-adjustable top basket	Foldable / removable tines	Anti-flood device	Concealed element	Cycle time (min)*	Dimensions (H x W x D, cm)	10 Water connection	Place settings	11 Type	Warranty (years)	Origin	Manufacturer / distributor	Price ($)**
4	✓	F, R	✓	✓	94	80 x 60 x 60	H or C	12	FW, BI	2	Italy	Maytag	1099
4	✓	F, R	✓	✓	94	80 x 60 x 60	H or C	12	FW, BI	2	Italy	Maytag	1299
6	✓	F	✓	✓	97	85 x 60 x 60	H or C	12	I	2	Germany	Whirlpool	1695
6	✓	F	✓	✓	97	85 x 60 x 60	H or C	12	FW, BI	2	Germany	Whirlpool	1399
8	✓		✓		107	85 x 60 x 60	C rec	12	FW, BI	2	EU	Major Electrical Appliances	1299
8	✓		✓		107	85 x 60 x 60	C rec	12	FW, BI	2	EU	Major Electrical Appliances	1599
8	✓		✓		107	85 x 60 x 60	C rec	12	I	2	EU	Major Electrical Appliances	1549
7	✓	F	✓	✓	98	85 x 60 x 60	H or C	14	FW, BI	2	Korea	LG	1499
7	✓	F	✓	✓	98	85 x 60 x 60	H or C	14	FW, BI	2	Korea	LG	999
1	✓			✓	114	85 x 60 x 60	C rec	14	FW, BI	2	Germany	Bosch	1149
1	✓			✓	114	85 x 60 x 60	C rec	14	BI	2	Germany	Bosch	1599
0	✓		✓	✓	104	85 x 60 x 60	H or C	12	FW	2	China	Haier	899
2 **(B)**		R		✓	118	82 x 60 x 58 **(B)**	C rec	14 **(B)**	BI	2	NZ	Fisher & Paykel	1933 **(B)**
2 **(B)**		R		✓	118	82 x 60 x 58 **(B)**	C rec	14 **(B)**	BI	2	NZ	Fisher & Paykel	1894 **(B)**
2 **(B)**		R		✓	118	82 x 60 x 58 **(B)**	C rec	14 **(B)**	BI	2	NZ	Fisher & Paykel	1767 **(B)**
2 **(B)**		R		✓	118	82 x 60 x 58 **(B)**	C rec	14 **(B)**	I	2	NZ	Fisher & Paykel	1830 **(B)**
4		R			86	83 x 60 x 56	C rec	12	BI	2	NZ	Fisher & Paykel	1057
3		R			86	83 x 60 x 56	C rec	12	BI	2	NZ	Fisher & Paykel	1599
3		R			86	83 x 60 x 56	C rec	12	BI	2	NZ	Fisher & Paykel	1020
1				✓	100	82 x 60 x 55	H or C	14	BI	2	Sweden	Asko	1399
1				✓	100	82 x 60 x 55	H or C	14	BI, I	2	Sweden	Asko	1549
	✓	F, R	✓	✓	104	82 x 60 x 57	H or C	14	FW, BI	5	France	Kleenmaid	2399
	✓	F, R	✓	✓	104	82 x 60 x 57	H or C	14	FW, BI	5	France	Kleenmaid	2599
				✓	79	85 x 60 x 60	H or C	12	FW, BI	2	Germany	Whirlpool	1399
				✓	79	85 x 60 x 60	H or C	12	FW, BI	2	Germany	Whirlpool	1279

4 Ease of use score

This reflects ease of loading and unloading, with a focus on awkward items such as large plates and tall glasses, as well as how versatile the baskets are and how easy it is to access and clean the filter.

5 Energy efficiency score/energy used

This is based on the amount of energy used by the dishwasher on the 'normal' program. The less energy used, the higher the score.

6 Water efficiency score/water used

This is based on the amount of water used by the dishwasher on the 'normal' program. The less water used, the higher the score.

7 Noise

These are the maximum noise levels recorded during the 'normal' program, measured 1 m away from the machine and 1 m from the ground. A measurement of over 50 dB means the dishwasher is quite noisy, although they're all noisy enough to be aware of them while they're running.

8 Running cost

This is an estimate of how much it'll cost you to run the machine over 10 years for water and electricity if you run one full load every day using the 'normal' cycle. The calculations are based on 12.5 cents per kWh for electricity, and $1 per 1000 L for water. To simplify it we haven't included depreciation or interest costs, nor the cost of detergent.

9 Features

See *Useful features*, page 39, for more on those listed in the table. 'R' means the tines are removable, 'F' that they can be folded down.

10 Water connection

H or C: You can connect the dishwasher to hot or cold water.

C rec: The manufacturer recommends connection to a cold tap.

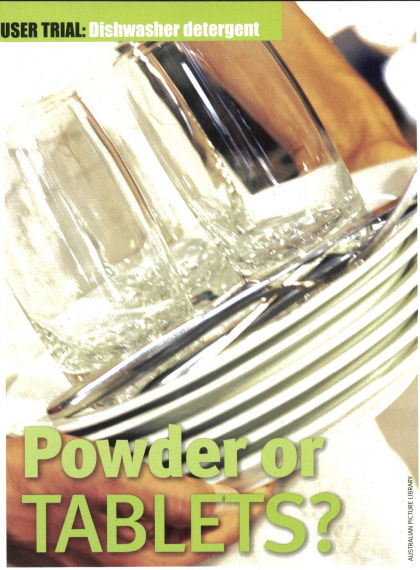
See *What to look for*, page 39, for more on hot or cold water.

11 Types available

FW: Freestanding, with a worktop (can generally be built in too).
BI: Built in (some mightn't have top or side panels).
I: Integrated — you can fit a front panel to match the rest of your kitchen cupboard doors.

BRANDS MISSING

*You might notice some widely available brands (**SIMPSON, DISHLEX, AEG, ELECTROLUX, WESTINGHOUSE**, for example) missing from this test. Unfortunately the new models were being released too late for us to include them. We're planning an update in the next few months to include these models.*



AUSTRALIAN PICTURE LIBRARY

Powder or TABLETS?

Is it worth spending five to seven times as much for the new tablets instead of powder?

IN A NUTSHELL

On trial: *10 dishwasher detergent powders and four tablets, including two with built-in rinse aid.*

The four tablet *detergents left most of the conventional powders behind for performance and popularity. But convenience and quality come at a price.*

All the dishwasher detergents in our trial will clean your dishes pretty well. Even the lowest-ranking and cheapest of the bunch scored more than 70% overall and will give you a reasonable wash. However, our trialists overwhelmingly thought dishwasher detergent tablets worked better than conventional powders.

"I've wondered about the tablets and now I think I might buy them," commented one trialist on the **FINISH Powerball**. "It cleaned much better than any I've tried before." "Easy to use in the tablet form — an accurate dosage, no spillage," commented another. Only two powders but all the four brands of tablet in our trial made it into the *What to buy* list.

On the downside, detergent tablets generally cost at least twice as much per load as powder detergents. And you can't adjust the dosage. As one trialist remarked: "You probably overdose some loads unwillingly where you could use much less detergent."

CAUTION: STRONG CHEMICALS

Alkaline salts make up the bulk of a typical dishwasher detergent. They're the carbonate, silicate or phosphate salts of sodium or potassium, which help with the cleaning process by reacting with the fats on the dishes. Their very high pH helps dissolve away dirt, but over time these harsh ingredients can also strip away glazes on crockery and wear away glassware, making it cloudy and scratched.

Alkalis are caustic and cause a corrosive reaction in the mouth and throat if accidentally swallowed. Young children are at particular risk of poisoning, so ensure you always store dishwasher detergent out of their reach and no residue is left in the detergent compartment after the wash.

A little while ago a reader wrote to us, dismayed that the dishwasher detergent tablets she'd just bought were wrapped in shiny silver and green foil that made them look very much like they contained after-dinner mints or lollies. "Surely this is totally irresponsible packaging," she said. The manufacturer told us the new **FINISH Powerball Brilliant** tablets (with rinse aid) have a slightly different wrapping (they're not in our trial because they were being reformulated).

Of the products in our trial, the plastic containers that hold detergent powder are probably the most difficult to open by little hands and fingers — you have to squeeze the cap to open them. The tablets are pretty easy to rip out of their packaging with hands or teeth, or to push through a blister pack. Powders in cardboard containers are the easiest to get at, once the box is opened.

OTHER INGREDIENTS

To remove tannin stains from tea and coffee cups and help break down protein remnants, dishwasher detergents also contain bleach.

In the dishwasher, **chlorine bleach** can cause plastic kitchenware to deteriorate and silverware to discolour, and it's incompatible with enzymes, which are nowadays often added to dishwasher detergents.

Detergents with enzymes tend to use **oxygen-based bleach**, which is less hazardous to humans and the environment. Of the products in the trial, we know that **FINISH Powerball, CASTLE 3 in 1 Active Tabs, KWIT, LOGIX** tablets and **FINISH** powder contain oxygen-based bleach.

Enzymes help break down proteins and starches from egg, pasta, cereal and the like, so the other ingredients can remove them. They produce good wash results at lower temperatures (around 40–55°C), above which they become less effective. A lot of the products in the trial contain enzymes;

MORNING FRESH Ultra Shine and RELIANCE powder don't. (The labels of the BI-LO, LOGIX, SAVINGS and TUNDRA powders don't mention enzymes either.)

Other possible ingredients include **surfactants** (to lower the surface tension of the water so it better wets the dishes to loosen dirt, and keep it suspended in the water, not back on the crockery); **phosphates** (to soften the water so the surfactants work better); and **corrosion inhibitors** (to minimise corrosion of metal parts in the dishwasher, cutlery and pots).

Two of the dishwasher tablets in the trial also contain a built-in **rinse aid**: MORNING FRESH Ultra Shine and CASTLE 3 in 1 Active Tabs. Both products scored very well, but so did other tablets without a built-in rinse aid.

Rinse aid is added so the water drains quickly from the dishes and to prevent streaking and spotting. With traditional detergents you can add liquid rinse aid separately. If it's already built into the detergent, don't fill up the machine's dispenser with additional rinse aid, otherwise the 'double dose' could adversely affect the product's performance — it did in our trial for one of the two products with built-in rinse aid. However, for our scoring purposes we only used the results from those trialists who used these two products without additional rinse aid, so overall fewer trialists evaluated them.

CHOICE HOME TESTER — THE TRIAL

More than 300 CHOICE Home Testers received four detergents each (the powders in clear plastic bottles and the tablets in their original packaging in a plastic bag) and used each one for three normal loads in their dishwasher. After each load they assessed and noted down how clean the product had washed the dishes and whether they were streak-free or it had left behind any spotting, filming or chalky residue. After three loads with each product, they rated it overall. We converted their ratings into percentage scores.

On average, each detergent was trialled in around 120 loads by 40 CHOICE Home Testers. The exceptions are the two products with inbuilt rinse aid (**CASTLE 3 in 1 Active Tabs** and **MORNING FRESH Ultra Shine**), which were tried around half as often — see *Other ingredients*, left.

WHAT TO BUY

The first three detergent tablets below performed best in the trial, but the **LOGIX** tablets cost around a third less. The two powders are best value for money while still doing a very good job.

	Price per load (¢)
FINISH Powerball (tablets)	28
CASTLE 3 in 1 Active Tabs (tablets)	31
MORNING FRESH Ultra Shine (tablets)	27
KWIT (powder) BEST BUY	10
LOGIX (tablets)	20
LOGIX (powder) BEST BUY	8

TAMARA GRAHAM

1 PERFORMANCE

Brand / name (in rank order)	Overall score (%)	Cleaning score (%)	Streak-free score (%)	Type	2 Contains rinse aid	Manufacturer / distributor	3 Price per load (cents)
FINISH Powerball	89	89	90	Tablets		Reckitt Benckiser	28
CASTLE 3 in 1 Active Tabs	87	86	88	Tablets	✓	Campbell Consumer Products	31
MORNING FRESH Ultra Shine	87	86	88	Tablets	✓	Cussons	27
KWIT	86	83	86	Powder		Reckitt Benckiser	10
LOGIX (tablets)	85	85	87	Tablets		Aldi	20
LOGIX (powder)	83	83	88	Powder		Aldi	8
RELIANCE (A)	80	82	84	Powder		Coles	7
FINISH	79	79	82	Powder		Reckitt Benckiser	11
BI-LO (A)	77	79	82	Powder		Bi-Lo	4
HOME BRAND	76	76	78	Powder		Woolworths	4
SAVINGS	76	79	82	Powder		Coles	4
NO FRILLS	75	77	76	Powder		Franklins	4
TUNDRA	73	75	80	Powder		Aldi	4
BLACK & GOLD	72	75	77	Powder		AAPW	4

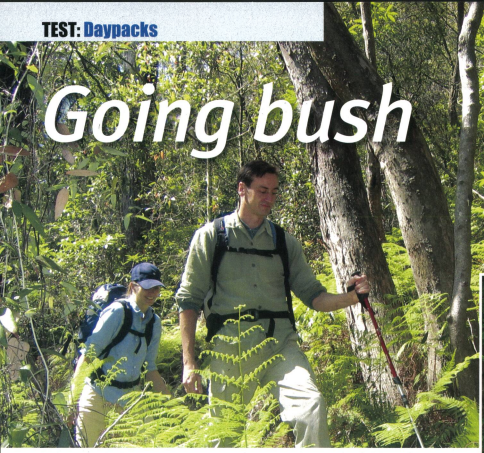
AAPW Australia Asia/Pacific Wholesalers.
(A) *The distributor told us this product's formulation may be reviewed in the near future.*

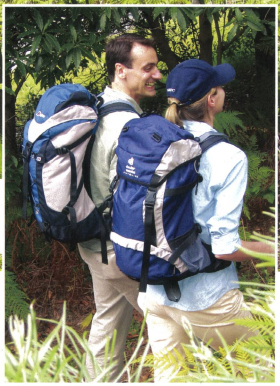
1 Performance scores
Overall performance is a separate score, not a combination of cleaning and streak-free performance. See *The trial*, above right, for details.

2 Contains rinse aid
See *Other ingredients*, above, for details.

3 Price per load
This is based on the price we paid in May/June 2003 for a 1 kg packet of powder, or for the largest packet of tablets available at the time. The price is based on a 20 g (or one tablet) dose for a 'normal' wash cycle; older models may require more detergent. The actual amount you'll use depends on the dishwasher manufacturer's recommendation, whether you live in a hard-water area and your load of dishes.

Going bush





ULTE WEGMANN

Eight daypacks put through their paces outdoors and in the lab to find the best.

IN A NUTSHELL

- **Some of the packs** *our bushwalkers liked ended up sad and soggy in our water-resistance test. A well designed rain cover with a drain hole at the bottom is good when the weather gets wet.*
- **Some packs** *were much more vulnerable to punctures and rips.*

Strap on a pack and head for the bush? If that's your idea of a good day out you'll need a good medium-sized daypack to stow all those walking essentials.

Ideally it'll be comfortable, easy to use and its compartments will be functional. But it also needs to survive the rigours of outdoor adventuring. And if the heavens open while you're still three hours' walk away from shelter, a pack that's rainproof might at least keep your essentials dry, if not your spirits.

To find the best daypacks for a day in the bush, we looked at eight medium-capacity models (30–35 L — a size suitable for long day walks) and put them through a bushwalking trial and laboratory tests.

USING THEM

We recruited some highly experienced and keen bushwalkers to try out the packs, which were loaded up with bottled water, clothing and a variety of common bushwalking items.

Then it was time to start walking. When they got back to base-camp the volunteers judged how comfortable the packs were, how easy the straps were to adjust, how comfortable these were, and the ease of adjusting and releasing the waist buckle. We also asked them how easy it was to open, load and close the main compartment, and how functional all those extra little pockets really were.

Finally, the big question — how would they rate each pack overall, on a scale of one to 10?

Our bushwalkers rated only one pack as excellent overall — the **BERGHAUS Dart 33**. They all thought its shoulder straps and back padding were 'very comfortable'. One also said: "Great features including side straps for extra gear and loops for walking poles. Excellent for organising gear and it's comfortable."

The next-best-liked models were the **DEUTER** and **KATHMANDU**. The harness on both packs was very easy to secure and adjust and considered comfortable overall, and their main compartments had good access and were functional to use.

Our bushwalkers also gave the **BERGHAUS Freeflow 35** and **GREAT OUTDOORS Daintree** good scores — see the table, page 46, for details. However, comfort and usefulness aren't the full story ...

WHAT THE LAB FOUND

Our lab assessment involved a shoulder harness torture test (all the packs survived this), plus water, puncture and tear-resistance tests. These are often part and parcel of outdoor adventuring, and a pack designed to take them couldn't be too tough. The table details the results.

What we often find in combined user trials and lab tests is that very good performance in one area doesn't always translate to the same in the other. For example, the bushwalkers' preferred daypack, the **BERGHAUS Dart 33**, only ranked equal fifth in the lab assessment. And the pack that did best in the lab tests, the **WILDERNESS EQUIPMENT**, was rated equal last by the bushwalkers.

But the **DEUTER** did well in both areas, coming out best overall, although it was let down slightly in our puncture and rip tests.

SOGGY PACK = WET JUMPER

It's not much fun putting one of those on. That's why we subjected the packs to fairly heavy simulated rain for 10 minutes. We'd previously filled up the packs with newspaper so we could easily judge the degree of water infiltration.

The most water-resistant packs are the **DEUTER** and **WILDERNESS EQUIPMENT**. Although both allowed some water to enter, this was mostly damp patches along the seams.

The **CARIBEE** and **KATHMANDU** packs were the worst in the rain. Both let in a large amount of water, which pooled freely in the base of the pack, soaking a lot of the newspaper — just not good enough.

RAIN COVER = DRY JUMPER?

Not necessarily. Four packs came with a rain cover, and initially we tested their water resistance with these fitted, to find out how well they worked.

Only the rain cover on the **DEUTER** was rated excellent. The covers on the **BERGHAUS Dart 33**, **BERGHAUS Freeflow** and **TATONKA** all allowed at least some water to pool and soak into the packs. We thought the **DEUTER** probably did much better than these three because its rain cover was the only one with a drain hole, preventing water from pooling in the cover.

However, when we retested these four packs without their rain covers they all let in even more water. In fact only one pack did well with no rain cover: the **WILDERNESS EQUIPMENT**. It's made of canvas — a generally waterproof and durable material.

So a rain cover with a drain hole is a very useful feature for polyester or polyester/nylon packs. For even greater protection against the elements, consider getting a good-quality waterproof 'stuff sack' to fit inside the pack.

What to look for

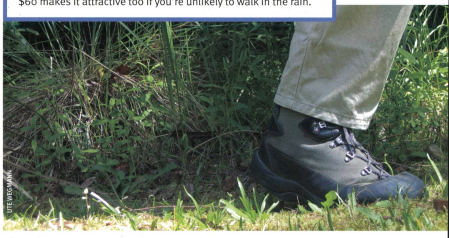
- That golden rule of shopping applies — try before you buy. You can do this most effectively by loading the pack up with heavy items (ask the sales assistant for help), then trying to adjust the straps to suit your body shape. If possible, also try it on with a thick jumper or similar to make sure you can adjust the straps to suit cold conditions. Generally, the pack should hang just below your shoulders, with the bottom resting on your hips.
- **Shoulder straps** — make sure they're comfortable and don't dig into you.
- A **padded back** or **mesh support** can help prevent the contents you're carrying digging into you — good if you'll be carrying a heavy load over long distances.
- A **mesh back support** can also help keep you cool by allowing ventilation between the pack and your back (see the photo, page 47), but check that the pack's main compartment is still big enough for your gear.
- **Compression straps** enable the contents of a half-full pack to be compacted together for walking comfort.
- **A chest strap** can be useful, particularly if you're carrying a heavy load.
- A **hydration system holder** allows a tube to poke from inside to outside, giving you hands-free, sip-as-you-go water (you need to buy the bottle and tube separately).
- If you'll be spending a lot of time in wet areas with your pack, look for **quality canvas construction** or a **rain cover with a drain hole**. Consider investing in a good-quality waterproof 'stuff sack'.

WHAT TO BUY

DEUTER Aircomfort Futura 32	$175
BERGHAUS Dart 33	$110
BERGHAUS Freeflow II 35	$120
GREAT OUTDOORS Daintree	$60

The **DEUTER** and **BERGHAUS Freeflow** were liked by the bushwalkers and did pretty well in the lab tests.

The **BERGHAUS Dart** and **GREAT OUTDOORS** let in quite a lot of water, but the **BERGHAUS** was the trialists' favourite for comfort and usefulness, so if you're the kind of walker who'd quit anyway in the rain it could be the one to go for. The bushwalkers gave the **GREAT OUTDOORS** a score of 70%, and its price tag of $60 makes it attractive too if you're unlikely to walk in the rain.



	PERFORMANCE			4 FEATURES						SPECIFICATIO
Brand / model (in rank order)	1 Overall score (%)	2 Lab score (%)	3 Bushwalking trial score (%)	Compression straps	External pockets	Hydration system holder	Rain protection cover	Mesh backing	Elasticised chest strap	Max. shoulder harness length
DEUTER Aircomfort Futura 32 **(A)**	80	79	80	✓	4	✓	✓	✓	✓	90
BERGHAUS Dart 33	79	67	90	✓	4	✓	✓		✓	95
BERGHAUS Freeflow II 35	72	74	70	✓	2	✓	✓	✓	✓	94
GREAT OUTDOORS Daintree **(B)**	69	67	70	✓	4	✓			✓	90
WILDERNESS EQUIPMENT Traverse	67	83	50		1				✓	85
KATHMANDU Katabatic	65	49	80	✓	3	✓			✓	90
TATONKA Motion 25	62	73	50		3		✓	✓	**(C)**	86
CARIBEE Equinox 30	55	60	50		3	✓		✓	✓	81

Profiles

Daypacks in the *What to buy* list are profiled in rank order; see the table for other features they have and detailed scores. Prices are those provided by distributors in August 2003.

PROFILES: ANTHONY SAMUEL

DEUTER AIRCOMFORT FUTURA 32

Price: $175

Good points

- Rated highly by our experienced bushwalkers.
- Excellent water resistance with its rain cover (although very poor without it).
- The main compartment can be divided in two by an internal zip and has separate external access to the lower compartment — good for isolating damp towels or clothes, for example.
- A wide range of features: Four external pockets (including one for the rain cover, two mesh pockets and a top pocket), an internal security pocket, side straps for extra loads, an internal hydration system holder and a walking-pole attachment.

Bad points

- Relatively expensive.
- Relatively easy to puncture and rip.

BERGHAUS DART 33

Price: $110

Good points

- Rated best by our experienced bushwalkers.
- Survived well in the puncture and rip tests.
- A wide range of features: Four external pockets (including a large front pocket, one for the rain cover, a top pocket and a waist belt pocket), key clip, side straps for extra loads, internal hydration system holder, an internal security pocket and walking-pole attachments.

Bad points

- Poor in the water-resistance test with the rain cover fitted and very poor without.
- The main compartment is a bit narrow for loading bulky items.
- Access to the top pocket is a bit tight.

BERGHAUS FREEFLOW II 35

Price: $120

Good points

- Rated quite highly by our experienced bushwalkers.
- A wide range of features: Rain cover with pocket, top pocket, key clip, side straps for extra loads, internal hydration system holder, walking-pole attachments, internal security pocket, front webbing for extra loads.
- One of the better packs for water resistance using the rain cover, though poor without it.

Bad points

- Access to the top pocket is a bit tight.

nist strap ngth (cm)	Weight (kg)	Stated capacity (L)	Material	Warranty (years)	Origin	Manufacturer / distributor	Price ($)*
7	1.5	32	Polyester	'Lifetime' **(D)**	Vietnam	Velo-Vita **(A)**	175 **(F)**
6	1.2	33	Nylon, polyester	'Lifetime' **(D)**	China	Outdoor Agencies	110
2	1.4	35	Nylon, polyester	'Lifetime' **(D)**	China	Outdoor Agencies	120
7	0.9	35	Polyester	1	China	Arthur Ellis	60
3	1.0	33	Canvas	'Lifetime' **(D)**	Vietnam	Sea to Summit	139
6	1.1	35	Polyester	**(E)**	Vietnam	Kathmandu	140
7	1.1	30	50% nylon, 50% polyester	1	Vietnam	Outdoor Survival Australia	120
6	0.9	30	Polyester	'Lifetime' **(D)**	China	Clipper International	85 **(G)**

* *Prices are recommended retail, as provided by distributors in August 2003, unless otherwise stated.*

(A) *May be hard to find in shops. Contact the distributor on (02) 9695 7744 to find a store near you.*

(B) *Discontinued, but you may still find it in shops.*

(C) *Has a non-elasticised chest strap.*

(D) *'Lifetime' warranty simply means the product is guaranteed to last as long as it lasts; a stated time is always preferable.*

(E) *"Guaranteed for the period prescibed by law" — which means you're covered by the statutory warranty, as required by the Trade Practices Act, but no formal warranty in terms of years.*

(F) *We paid $159, but the distributor nominated $175 as an average retail price.*

(G) *We paid $89.95; the distributor says $80–85 would be a "representative" price.*

1 Overall score

The bushwalking and lab scores were weighted equally to reach the overall score.

2 Lab score

This was made up of the following:

- **Water resistance test** (35%).

We put the packs under a shower for 10 minutes at a flow rate simulating fairly heavy rain. Packs with rain covers were tested with and without them.

- **Shoulder harness strength** (35%).

The packs were loaded up with 15 kg (roughly twice what might normally be carried in a pack this size) and subjected to 10,000 jolts to strain the stitching. This is a tough test and all the packs survived it unscathed.

- **Material strength** (30%).

This consisted of puncture- and rip-resistance tests (50% each). We dropped a 1 kg sharpened weight on the packs from a height of 25 cm and measured and scored the size of the resulting holes. We then scored the ease with which, once punctured, the material could be ripped.

3 Bushwalking trial score

We asked the bushwalkers to rate each pack on a 10-point scale, averaged their results and converted them to percentages.

4 Features

See *What to look for* on page 45 for an explanation of these.

GREAT OUTDOORS DAINTREE

Price: $60

Good points

- Rated quite highly by our experienced bushwalkers.
- Lightweight.
- Good material strength overall — very good rip resistance.
- A wide range of features: Four external pockets including a top one, two mesh pockets and a shoulder pouch, internal hydration system holder, top side straps for extra loads, internal security pocket.
- Comparatively cheap.

Bad points

- Relatively poor water resistance.

WHAT ABOUT THE REST?

The bushwalkers didn't like the **WILDERNESS EQUIPMENT, TATONKA** and **CARIBEE** as much as the others, while the **KATHMANDU** (which they liked) did poorly in our tests for water, puncture and tear resistance.

A mesh back support, as on the pictured Deuter Aircomfort Futura 32, helps give ventilation between your back and the pack and could make hot-weather hiking a lot more comfortable. However, it may restrict access to the bottom of the pack — check when you're buying if this would annoy you.

recalls&bans

Nowadays there are so many product recalls we may not be able to print all of them in CHOICE. For comprehensive recall information go to the Federal Treasury website: ***www.recalls.gov.au****. If you don't have web access, call the* ***Consumer Safety Unit*** *on (02) 6263 2747.*

Companies often rent 1800 numbers for a couple of months after a recall is announced. If the number given is no longer operating, phone the manufacturer or retailer direct.

FOOD: MasterFoods has recalled **Dolmio Frozen Ready Meals** in the following varieties: beef cannelloni 340 g; beef lasagne 340 g and 2.1 kg; chicken ravioli alfredo 340 g; chicken & mushroom lasagne 340 g; mushroom risotto 340 g; pumpkin cannelloni 340 g; spaghetti bolognese 340 g; spinach & ricotta lasagne with chicken 340 g; spring vegetable risotto 340 g; and vegetable lasagne 2.1 kg. All best-before dates prior to 24 Oct 2004.
The problem: The products contain egg and soy protein, and this isn't disclosed on the packaging.
What to do: If you have an allergy or intolerance to egg or soy protein, don't eat the above products. Return it to the place of purchase for a refund, or call 1800 240 446 for more information.

FOOD: Hunts Foods has recalled **Hunts Frozen Beef Savoury Rice**, 375 g, all best-before dates up to and including 11 Sep 05, and **Hunts Frozen Chicken Savoury Rice**, 375 g, all best-before dates up to and including 11 Sep 05, and both sold in WA.
The problem: The products contain undeclared allergens including milk protein, lactose, gluten and sulphites.
What to do: If you have an allergy or sensitivity to any of these, don't eat the product. Return it to the place of purchase for a refund, or call (08) 9841 2588 for more information.

ANTI-FUNGAL CREAM: Bayer Australia has recalled **Mycospor Bifonazole** 10mg/g, 15 g tube, batch number 3A02, expiry January 2006, Aust R 41931, and **Canesten Bifonazole Once Daily Anti-Fungal Body Cream**, 30 g, 1% w/w tube, batch number 2A22, expiry date January 2005, Aust R 80846.
The problem: These batches have been found to contain low concentrations of the active ingredient, bifonazole.
What to do: Return it to the place of purchase for refund or replacement, or call 1800 039 076 for more information.

VITAMIN SUPPLEMENT: Vital Health Foods has recalled **Vital Vitamin B Complex Capsule**, batch number 0300693, expiry date 5/2005, Aust L 79284, in a 50-capsule bottle.
The problem: The capsules contain substantially less folic acid than is stated on the label.
What to do: If you're pregnant or planning a pregnancy, these capsules contain substantially less than the 400 micrograms of folic acid recommended per day, especially prior to and during the first few months of pregnancy. Call 1300 131 686 for more information, or return them to the place of purchase for a refund; consult your GP if you're concerned.

BOOK: Bookwise International has recalled **Amazing Baby Listen and Play Book**, sold in July 2003, ISBN 190451300X, with a recommended price of $29.95.
The problem: The book contains a clacker that, if subjected to vigorous treatment, may disassemble into small parts including a retainer pin. This pin poses a choking hazard to a young child.
What to do: Remove the book from the reach of children. Return it to the place of purchase for a refund, or for more information call 1300 55 2665 or (08) 8268 8222.

TOY: Irwin Pacific has recalled **Pet Me Platypus**, item number 42080, barcode 0663488 420809, sold through Early Learning Centres nationally, and through toy specialists and wholesalers in Victoria between September 10 and October 31, 2003.
The problem: The shaped plastic button covers may detach from the toy, posing a choking hazard to young children.
What to do: Remove it from the reach of children. Return it to the place of purchase for a refund, or call 1800 228 889 for more information.

TOY: Golf Trading has recalled a toy **Ice Cream Cart**, sold in discount stores through NSW and Queensland between November 2002 and September 2003.
The problem: The ice cream cart has small parts that pose a choking hazard to young children.
What to do: Remove it from the reach of young children. Return it to the place of purchase for a refund or call (02) 9764 2615 for more information.

WELDING MACHINES: Welding Industries of Australia has recalled **Induro 145**, Pt No. MC-100-0, serial numbers beginning with M100A0802 and M100A0902; and **Induro 165**, Pt No. MC101-0, serial numbers beginning with M101A0802 and M101A0902.
The problem: Under certain circumstances an accessible case attachment screw could become electrically live.
What to do: Stop using the welder. Call (08) 8276 6494 to make arrangements to have it modified.

GENERATOR: Star Products has recalled **Star 950 Camping Generator** with red fuel tank, sold October 13–31, 2003, at Bunnings stores in the NT, SA and WA.
The problem: There's a risk of an electric shock through the AC outlet of the generator if the user inserts the charging leads into the AC outlet instead of the 12 V DC outlet.
What to do: Return it to the place of purchase so new socket assemblies can be fitted and new leads supplied. For more information call (08) 9440 1530.

OUTBOARD MOTOR: Yamaha Motor Australia has recalled **Yamaha outboard motor**, models F200A, FL200A, F225A and FL225A.
The problem: The throttle linkage may drag due to defective bushes. This will cause the engine not to return fully to the idle speed position after operating at cruising speeds.
What to do: Contact your nearest Yamaha outboard dealer to arrange to have new parts installed at no cost. For more information call (02) 9757 0011 or go to www.yamaha-motor.com.au.

JET SKI: Kawasaki Motors has recalled **Kawasaki Jet Ski Personal Watercraft**, model JT1200-B1.
The problem: Under certain circumstances water could flow into the engine compartment, possibly causing the vessel to stop operating.
What to do: Contact your nearest Kawasaki dealer to arrange repair or call (02) 9684 2585 for more information.

BICYCLE: Southcott has recalled **Electra Coaster 7-speed bicycles** with derailleur gears, men's silver/red model and ladies' mint/white model.
The problem: The bikes have been sold without a spoke protector on the rear wheel, which is a requirement of the Australian standard.
What to do: Return the bike to the place of purchase to have it fitted with a spoke protector.

CAR: Volvo has recalled **Volvo XC90** vehicles, VIN range 000408 to 0042565.
The problem: The seatbelt attachment points for the second and third-row seats may not have been fitted or tightened correctly, so the occupant may not be properly secured in the event of an accident.
What to do: Contact your nearest Volvo dealer to arrange an inspection.

MOTORBIKE: BMW Australia has recalled **BMW R Series motorcycles**, model 2002–2003.
The problem: The engine may misfire.
What to do: Contact your nearest BMW dealer for repair.

MOTORBIKE: Triumph Motorcycle Company has recalled **Triumph Daytona 600 model motorcycles**.
The problem: The rear brakes may bind and compromise the stability of the motorcycle.
What to do: Contact your nearest Triumph motorcycle dealer to arrange repairs.

FREE BINDER & ISSUE

Health Reader

CHOICE
Volume 9, No. 10 December 2003
Health Reader
Published by the Australian Consumers' Association www.healthreader.com.au

Women's health

Birthing centres give good results

Birthing centres are not only more comfortable than obstetric wards, they are associated with better outcomes for many women, researchers say.

Others in wards are not the most comfortable places to be for expectant mums (or their partners). There can be a clinical, uncaring feel to the room, as well as the possibility of a medical condition that may be treated in a hospital ward but usually in the way midwives have approached childbirth. Home birthing centres are an attempt to overcome some of the shortcomings of midwife and ward birth at the same time. Ideally they offer the same level of medical assistance that a hospital can, should it be necessary, but in a less clinical, more 'at home' environment. To see if birthing centres were better, researchers have conducted a review of the medical literature and found that, for women at low risk of obstetric complications, there are indeed benefits. They are less likely to be induced, to have assisted births or be subjected to interventions like episiotomy (cutting the vagina to widen the birth canal) and more likely to breastfeed successfully in the early days. Women in birthing centres also appear to be more satisfied with the level of care they receive.

But it is not as simple as birth centres = good birthing. The researchers found a slight increase in neo-natal deaths in the birth centre setting but not enough, they said, to be statistically significant. The researchers cautioned that there is some risk in moving from the setting used to heighten for signs of complications, the researchers concluded. ●

For reference

Hodnett ED, Hofmeyr GJ. Home-like versus conventional settings for birth (Cochrane Review). In: The Cochrane Library, Issue 3, 2003. Oxford: Update Software.

NEWS FOR THE MONTH

The Good News

- Anti-inflammatory drugs show promise in Parkinson's disease
- Achilles surgery not always needed
- HRT may fight another day
- Better way of treating people with TMJ ●

The Bad News

- Illness can worsen MS symptoms
- Short-order pregnancies may be a problem
- Passive smoking at home — no excuses
- Spaceship ear be a health risk
- Bystanders could be better

YOUR NEXT ISSUE

Your next issue is the combined January/February issue and will be sent to you early February.

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Edited by Dr Norman Swan, the popular ABC medical broadcaster, it's in an easy-to-read newsletter format, and is published 10 times a year.

IN YOUR BONUS ISSUE:

- Passive smoking in the home — why ignorance of the risks is a major problem.
- Antihistamines — do they really help ease the symptoms of a common cold?
- Multiple sclerosis — a cholesterol-lowering drug shows promising signs for treating MS.
- Parkinson's disease — anti-inflammatory drugs may protect against developing Parkinson's.

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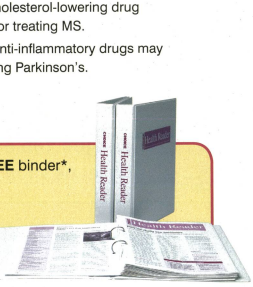

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index

HOW TO USE THIS INDEX
Bold type indicates a test, survey or trial report, normal type indicates other articles.
* Indicates an update of a previous report, additions or corrections to reports, small follow-up items, letters or recalls. For space reasons, the index generally doesn't include Choice Cuts and other small pieces.

Air conditioners, split-system **Oct**
Air quality, indoor Sep
Anti-aging creams Mar

Baby carriers **Mar,** Jun*
Backpacks, day **Jan/Feb**
Backphones Jul
Baldness treatments Jun, Dec*
Banks, how to switch Apr
Bar fridges **Jun**
Bathroom cleaners **Nov**
Bed sheets **Jun**
Beer, premium **Sep**
Biscuits, choc chip **Nov**
Brandt steam oven **Nov**
Breakfast cereals **May**

Camcorders, digital **Dec**
Cameras
compact and APS **Apr**
digital **Oct,** Jan/Feb*
disposable/single-use **Jan/Feb**
Cars
crash tests, ANCAP Apr
ethanol in petrol May, Aug*
reader reviews Aug
repair costs Mar
tyres **May**
used car safety Sep
CDMA mobile phones **Nov**
Champagne and sparkling wine **Dec**
Child/baby concerns
baby carriers **Mar,** Jun*
cots, portable **May**
high chairs **Oct**
jogger strollers **Jan/Feb**
layback strollers **Aug**
saving for education May
Chips, potato **Sep**
Choc chip biscuits **Nov**
Cleaners
bathroom **Nov**
Enjo products **Aug**
microfibre cloths **Aug**
oven **May**
Coffee (espresso) machines **Apr**
Computer monitors,
buying guide May
Convection heaters, electric **Apr**
Cooktops, induction **Aug**
Cordless phones **Apr**
Corporate social responsibility
jeans Jun, Oct*
running shoes Jan/Feb
Cots, portable **May**
Credit cards, top 10 and
buying guide Dec
Credit files Jan/Feb
Custard **Dec**

Daypacks **Jan/Feb**
Detergents, dishwasher **Jan/Feb**
Diet controversies Mar
Digital camcorders **Dec**
Digital cameras **Oct,** Jan/Feb*
Dishwasher detergents **Jan/Feb**
Dishwashers **Jan/Feb**
Dishwashing liquids **Apr**
Disposable cameras **Jan/Feb**
DIY home sales Nov
Duvets, buying guide May
DVD players **Dec**

Echinacea **Nov**
Education, saving for your
child's May
Energy retailers, changing Jul, Sep*
Enjo cleaning products **Aug**
Espresso machines **Apr**
Ethanol in petrol May, Aug*
Ethical manufacture
jeans Jun, Oct*
running shoes Jan/Feb
Ethical super Oct, Dec*

Fast food **Apr,** Jun*
Financial
credit cards Dec
credit files Jan/Feb
ethical super Oct, Dec*
home loan packages Mar
saving for education May
switching banks Apr
Food
breakfast cereals **May**
choc chip biscuits **Nov**
custard **Dec**
diet controversies Mar
fast food **Apr,** Jun*
healthy eating guidelines Mar
peanut butter **Jun**
percentage labelling Aug
pizza **Oct**
potato chips, wedges, shapes
Sep
pumpkin soup **Jul**
salad, prepacked **Dec**
soy **Jun**
'sports' water Jan/Feb
tea, pesticide residues in **May**
tuna, tinned **Jan/Feb**
Fridges
portable **Dec**
side-by-side **Nov**
small (no freezer) **Jun**
bigger than 450 L **May**

Garden
hoses **Oct**
lawnmowers/mulchers, petrol
Dec
Gas and electricity retailers,
changing Jul, Sep*
Gas instantaneous water
heaters **Oct**
Grills, 'health' **Jul**

Hair, baldness treatments Jun, Dec*
Hay fever treatments Oct
Headphones **Jul**
Health
ancillary insurance **Aug**
echinacea **Nov**
hay fever treatments Oct
healthy eating guidelines Mar
hospital insurance **Jul**
hospital, surviving Oct
prostheses costs Dec
soy Jun
sunscreens **Nov**
system, what's wrong? Jul
Heaters, electric convection **Apr**
High chairs **Oct**
Home loan packages Mar
Home, selling, DIY Nov
Hoses, garden **Oct**
Hospital insurance **Jul**
Hospital, surviving Oct
Hot water systems
choosing Oct
gas instantaneous **Oct**
House and contents insurance **Jun**

Index, four-year **Jun**
Indoor air quality Sep
Induction cooktops **Aug**
Insurance
ancillary health **Aug**
hospital **Jul**
house and contents **Jun**
travel **Mar,** Apr*, **Nov**
Internet dial-up problems Aug
Investment, ethical Oct, Dec*

Jeans, ethical manufacture Jun, Oct*
Jogger strollers **Jan/Feb**
Jogging shoes **Jan/Feb**
Juicers **Dec**

Knee-highs **Sep**

Labelling, food, percentage Aug
Laser printers, b&w **Apr**
Lawnmowers/mulchers, petrol **Dec**
Layback strollers **Aug**
LG Solardom oven **Nov**

Manufacture, ethical
jeans Jun, Oct*
running shoes Jan/Feb
Microfibre cleaning cloths **Aug**
Mobile phones
CDMA **Nov**
GSM **Jul**
Moisturisers **Apr**
Money — see Banks, Financial
Monitors, computer, buying guide
May
Mortgages, packaged Mar
Mulcher mowers, petrol **Dec**

Oven
Brandt, steam **Nov**
cleaners **May**
LG Solardom **Nov**

Peanut butter **Jun**
Percentage labelling of food Aug
Pesticide residues in tea **May**
Petrol, ethanol in May, Aug*
Phones, cordless **Apr**
Phones, mobile — see Mobile
phones
Pizza **Oct**
Portable cots **May**
Portable fridges **Dec**
Potato chips, wedges, shapes **Sep**
Premium beer **Sep**
Printers, laser, b&w **Apr**
Prostheses, costs Dec
Pumpkin soup **Jul**

Refrigerators — see Fridges
Retirement villages Sep
Running shoes **Jan/Feb**

Salad, prepacked **Dec**
Selling your home, DIY Nov
Sheets **Jun**
Shoes, running **Jan/Feb**
Solardom oven (LG) **Nov**
Soup, pumpkin **Jul**
Soy **Jun**
Soy milk maker **Jun**
Sparkling wine and champagne **Dec**
'Sports' water Jan/Feb
Steam oven (Brandt) **Nov**
Strollers
jogger **Jan/Feb**
layback **Aug**
Sunglasses **Aug,** Oct*
Sunscreens **Nov**
Superannuation, ethical Oct, Dec*
Supermarket prices **Jul**

Tea, pesticide residues in **May**
Telephones — see Phones
Television
51 cm **Apr, Aug***
68 cm **Nov**
Toothbrushes **Sep**
Travel insurance **Mar,** Apr*, **Nov**
Tuna, tinned **Jan/Feb**
Tyres **May**

Vacuum cleaners, cheap **Jul**
Video cameras, digital **Dec**

Washing machines **Mar, Sep,** Nov*
Washing-up liquids **Apr**
Water filters Mar, May*
Water heaters
choosing Oct
gas instantaneous **Oct**
Water, 'sports' Jan/Feb
Wine, sparkling and champagne **Dec**
Wrinkle creams Mar

HELP SUPPORT CHOICE

The Australian Consumers' Association is completely funded by our subscribers, book purchasers and other customers. We don't receive ongoing funding from government or any commercial source. Your donation or bequest to ACA will assist our work of informing and representing Australian consumers. To make a contribution or receive an information pack, call Lizzie (above) on 1800 069 552 or email us at ausconsumer@choice.com.au.

hardword

Socks for the single-footed competition

Thanks to everyone for your imaginative entries in our 'use for a single sock' competition (see November *Hard Word*).

It seems quite a few CHOICE readers have sock-eating washing machines — we certainly hope they're not ones we've recommended!

Wendy Brewer-Jones asked if she could have a copy of the CHOICE wine book if she won — to help her see double, boom boom.

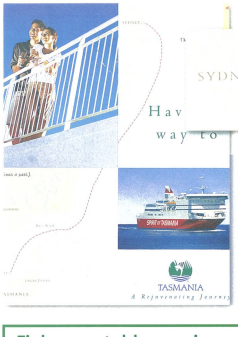
But the prize of a *Hard Word* book goes to Phil Jones for his groan-out-loud pun: "Golfers might appreciate the opportunity to buy a single extra sock in case they get a hole in one."

For those who missed out on the prize, don't despair — it's now available for only $10 from Consumer Bookshelf (see page 30. *The CHOICE Wine Guide 2004* is also available there.)

ENORMOUS SAVINGS ...

Yeah, a big fat zero.

We've been inundated with such bloopers nicked from supermarket shelves. Perhaps their appearance in our office helps explain why we (and fellow shoppers) can't always see how much things cost ...



SYDNEY ON MORETON BAY

We agree with reader Ian McDermott, who says, "I hope the ferry master has a better map!"

LOTTO NUMBERS?

Reader Betsey Pike is stumped by this use-by date — and we have to admit we are too.

Fish: vegetable or mineral?

Because apparently they're not animals: these fish oil tablets — containing "natural salmon oil" — are claimed to be completely "free of all animal derivatives". The gelatin-free capsule casing might well be "suitable for vegans", but someone seems to have forgotten the contents come with it.

Select Lifestyle Vegetarian (Vegicaps® Soft) Omega 3 Fish Oil capsules are completely natural and free of all animal derivatives.

Each capsule contains:
Natural Salmon Oil 1g (1000mg) which provides the following Omega 3 Marine Tryglycerides:
DHA (Docosahexaenoic acid) 120mg
EPA (Eicosapentaenoic acid) 180mg

DIRECTIONS FOR USE:
ADULTS: Take 1 capsule 3 times daily or as directed by your Health Care Professional.
CHILDREN: To be taken as directed by your Health Care Professional.

Indications:
• Provides temporary relief from the pain of arthritis.

Free from gelatin, gluten, artificial colouring.

99% BEEF FREE
INGREDIENTS WHEN RECONSTITUTED: MAIZE STARCH, MALTODEXTRIN (FROM WHEAT), ONION, SALT, CHIVES, FLAVOURS (CONTAIN MILK DERIVATIVES), BEVERAGE WHITENER (CONTAINS MILK DERIVATIVE), YEAST EXTRACT FLAVOUR ENHANCERS (621, 631), BEEF (1%), COLOUR (CARAMEL IV), SUNFLOWER OIL, WHEAT STARCH, SPICE EXTRACTS, HERB EXTRACTS.
99.5% FAT FREE
Continental
CUP A SOUP
HEARTY
BEEF

HOW ABOUT A LITTLE HELP?

The Hard Word would like to thank all the readers who've responded with examples of outrageous ads, promotions and products. Thanks to I McDermott, A Reeson, B Pike, S Mackie, the Vižintin family, R Cohen, L Field and Tarn for their contributions to this month's *Hard Word*. Please keep them coming. The book prize for this month's best entry goes to I McDermott.

If you have any examples you think deserve to be on this page, send them to *The Hard Word*, CHOICE, 57 Carrington Road, Marrickville 2204, or email your suggestions to thehardword@choice.com.au.